From Dr. Rebecca Smith-Coggins  
Chair, Stanford Physician Wellness Committee

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM EXPANDS

Difficult clinical events happen to all clinicians at some point in their careers. These events often cause negative emotions including self-doubt, depression, rumination, anxiety and a sense of isolation. It is important for us to help our colleagues limit their painful feelings of being alone in these circumstances.

Our Physician Peer Support Program was created to address this need. Volunteer trained physicians, from a variety of departments and levels of experience, are available to lend a friendly ear and help support a colleague during this difficult time. Conversations are legally protected and completely confidential, unless there is an issue of personal safety. Usually these conversations occur on the phone, but can also be held in person.

Similar to last year, we have trained medical staff physician and resident supporters. New this year, are a group of trained fellows and a group of providers from UHA. Each can address their group’s unique needs. The role of the supporter is to help a clinician cope by listening, offering perspective, emphasizing self-care and providing resources. We also provide litigation support. Psych back-up is available as needed.

The program can be activated by emailing medpeersupport@stanford.edu. As a matter of routine, all involved physicians in a known event will be contacted via email with the subject line “Touching base”. In addition, concerned colleagues or supervisors can ask that a physician be contacted. Physicians can also refer themselves.

We have received very positive feedback about the program - “I felt validated and less isolated in my experience. I am very appreciative of the support I received.” Even those declining to participate have expressed gratitude that the program is available. Connection with a colleague is a powerful means to expedite the healing process.

Calendar:

For details of these and more events & classes, or CME wellness courses, see WellMD Calendar

12/1  Candlelight Service of Remembrance
12/2  Patients’ Experiences of Medical Error Disclosure and Reconciliation
12/3  Allied Arts Guild Christmas Market (benefits LPCH)
12/4  Revolution: The Songwriting of the Beatles
12/6  Radiation Accidents and Terrorism
12/8  Grief Support Group
12/8  Take a Break, Pet a Dog
12/9  Caring for Gender Non-Conforming Children/Teens
12/10  Plant Oaks on Dish Hill
12/10  Medicine-Art Engagement Event
12/10  Holiday Musicale
12/13  Om under the Dome
12/16  Annual Messiah Sing/Play Along
12/18  Holiday Organ Recital
12/18  Tour Papua New Guinea Sculpture Garden

News:

- Report of the Task Force on Women in Leadership
- Medical Humanities and the Arts Research Grants – deadline 1/20
- Continuing Studies reg opens 11/28
- Volunteer over the holidays:
  - Food bank
  - Hands On Bay Area

Research:


“Mindful efforts to improve the healthcare culture and develop personal support systems can help surgeons become more resilient, provide higher quality patient care, and have longer productive professional lives. Institutional support systems are also necessary to assist ‘second victims’ to recover from the impact of an adverse patient event.”


Even though female internal medicine residents were more likely to use positive coping mechanisms such as emotional support, they were more likely to be burned out than male residents. Authors surmise this was due to their more frequent use of self-blame, which cancelled out coping benefits and was the single most important predictor of burnout in women.