



# Peer Support Plus

## Responding to Culture Change and Shaping Peer Support Within an Academic Department of Medicine

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AMA  
CMA  
BMA

# Background



- ▶ Quadruple aim of healthcare
- ▶ Shared responsibility for physician wellness

Peer support  
programs around  
adverse events

# Background



Within our Academic Department of Medicine

- ➔ Formal promotion of physician wellness since 2004
- ➔ Positive shifts in leadership and culture

It's ok to talk  
about  
wellness

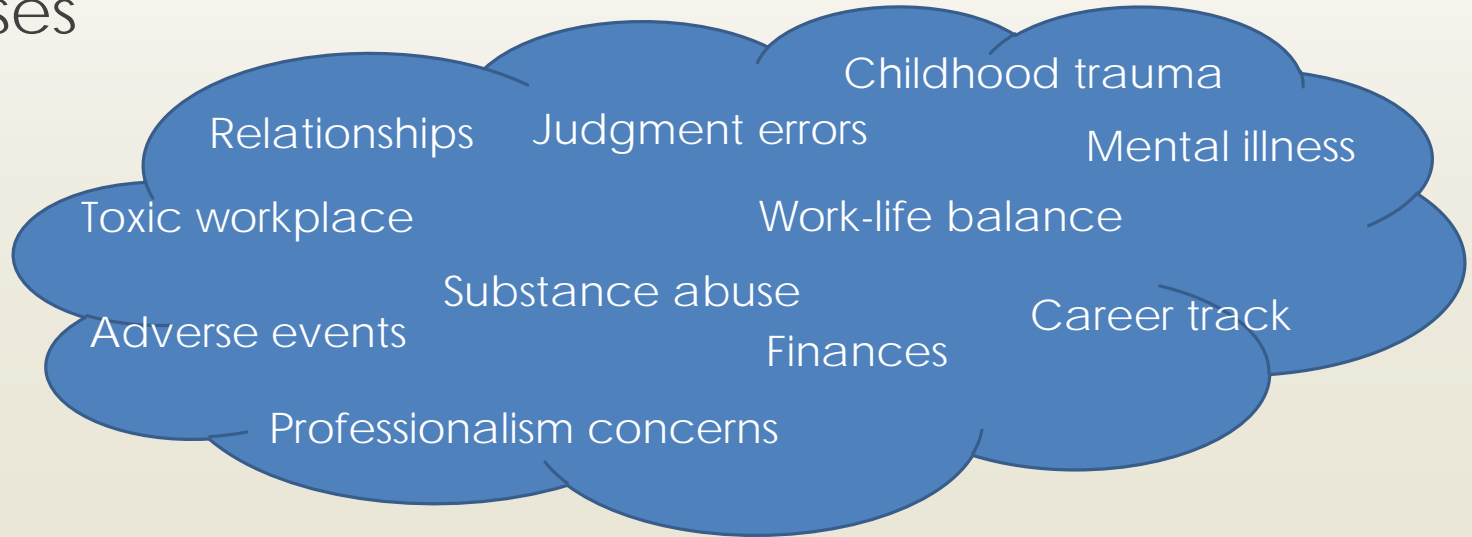
Members are  
vulnerable to  
stress

Members are  
valuable assets

# Background



- ▶ Department chair, vice-chairs, division chiefs, were frequently approached for support
- ▶ Physicians experience distress from many causes



# Innovation Objective



- To provide support and to enhance the culture of seeking support

# Approach



- Grow a peer support team from the grass roots

Ensure  
diversity

Identify  
those suited  
to the task

# Approach



➔ Peer support team members should

Ensure  
physician  
and patient  
safety

Offer  
guidance  
to existing  
resources

Be  
empathetic  
listeners

# Approach: Workshop



➔ Group discussions

De-briefing

Back-up

Further training topics

Prior informal experiences

Concerns



# Approach: Workshop



- ➔ Expert led discussions

National  
malpractice  
association -  
adverse  
events

Provincial  
physician  
health  
program  
resources

Empathetic  
listening

Self-harm  
risk

# Approach

- Launched in Feb 2018
- Email, snail mail, website
  - information sheet
  - confidential contact info
  - list of additional resources

## DOM Peer Support Team

THE DOM RECOGNIZES THAT OUR MEMBERS ARE OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSETS. IT BELIEVES THAT MEMBERS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES.

### WHO ARE WE?

We are DOM members available as resources for our colleagues. We aim to be supportive listeners, offer guidance, and act as liaison for accessing outside resources (i.e., professional services) and ensuring safety.

### WHY ARE WE HERE?

The practice of medicine may be rewarding, but may also at times be challenging. A member of the DOM may feel the need to seek support from a colleague. This may arise from any number of different situations, including imbalance between work and personal life; involvement in an adverse event, where a patient suffered serious or fatal harm; perceived inequity within the workplace; personal conflicts at home or at work; conflicts of interest; financial concerns; professionalism matters; or career-track indecision.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

A list of DOM Peer Support Team members is provided. You may contact *any person* on the list through his or her cell phone number or email and set up a time to talk. We take confidentiality seriously. The conversations you have with Peer Support Team members will be held in strict confidence. The boundary of this commitment would be crossed only if your Peer Support Team member were to have immediate safety concerns for you and/or others.

### GIVE US A CALL!



Questions? Contact  
Jane Lemaire MD FRCPC  
lemaire@ucalgary.ca

# Outcomes



- DOM members voiced appreciation for system-level wellness initiative
- Contact

Many reports of "informal" support

Tentative calls:  
"Is this an ok thing to talk to you about?"

12 contacts  
(none adverse event related)

6 support team members contacted

# Outcomes

- 1<sup>st</sup> follow-up peer support team meeting
- Further discussion and refinements



# Conclusions

- Support team shaped from the grass roots of our department
- Possible given strong leadership and a culture of wellness
- System-level “collegial” support for distress from diverse causes
- Formal support team may foster “informal” collegial support



It's ok to  
ask for  
support

People care

# Conclusions



Moving forward...

Three other departments seeking to use this model

Develop wellness initiatives to meet needs

Target peer support member training based on identified issues

Thank you!



Questions?