

Resident Physicians: Mental Health Experiences, Resources, and Challenges in Post-Graduate Medical Education

A Case Study of Ontario

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Resident Physician Mental Health

- ▶ Residency is an important milestone in the career path to becoming a physician
- ▶ Residents fulfill dual roles
 - ▶ **Learner** role: MD's continuing training in post-graduate medical education
 - ▶ **Physician** role: Practicing physicians in academic settings
- ▶ By looking at the resident population we can examine the challenges they face and gain a better understanding of how mental health issues may manifest following medical school and before going into practice

Overview of the literature: *Physician Health and Wellbeing*

- ▶ Physician health and mental health
 - ▶ Prevalence of Stress, Burnout, Substance abuse, depression, suicidal ideation & suicide
 - ▶ Exposure to workplace factors that increase work stress and dissatisfaction
- ▶ Trainee mental health
 - ▶ Environmental factors unique to physicians-in-training
 - ▶ Higher incidence of: Stress, Burnout, Depression, Suicidal Ideation

More recently, the need for **culture change** with emphasis on proactive, preventative, and protective strategies has been highlighted

- ▶ Growing emphasis on adopting an **organizational** and **system** level focus in *coordination* with individual approaches

Overview of the literature: *Physician Health Programs & Services*

- ▶ Programs and services
 - ▶ Provincial Physician Health Programs (PHP's) available for physicians, residents, medical students, and their families
 - ▶ National initiatives for suicide prevention
- ▶ Trainees
 - ▶ Resident wellness programs & National Resiliency Curriculum
- ▶ While programs and policies for mental health are present, they vary in their structure and delivery of services

Introduction to the Research Project

- ▶ Explicit focus on **resident physician** experiences with mental health in Canada
- ▶ Examining awareness and **help-seeking behaviours** of resident physicians, focusing on barriers & facilitators to **utilization** of mental health services

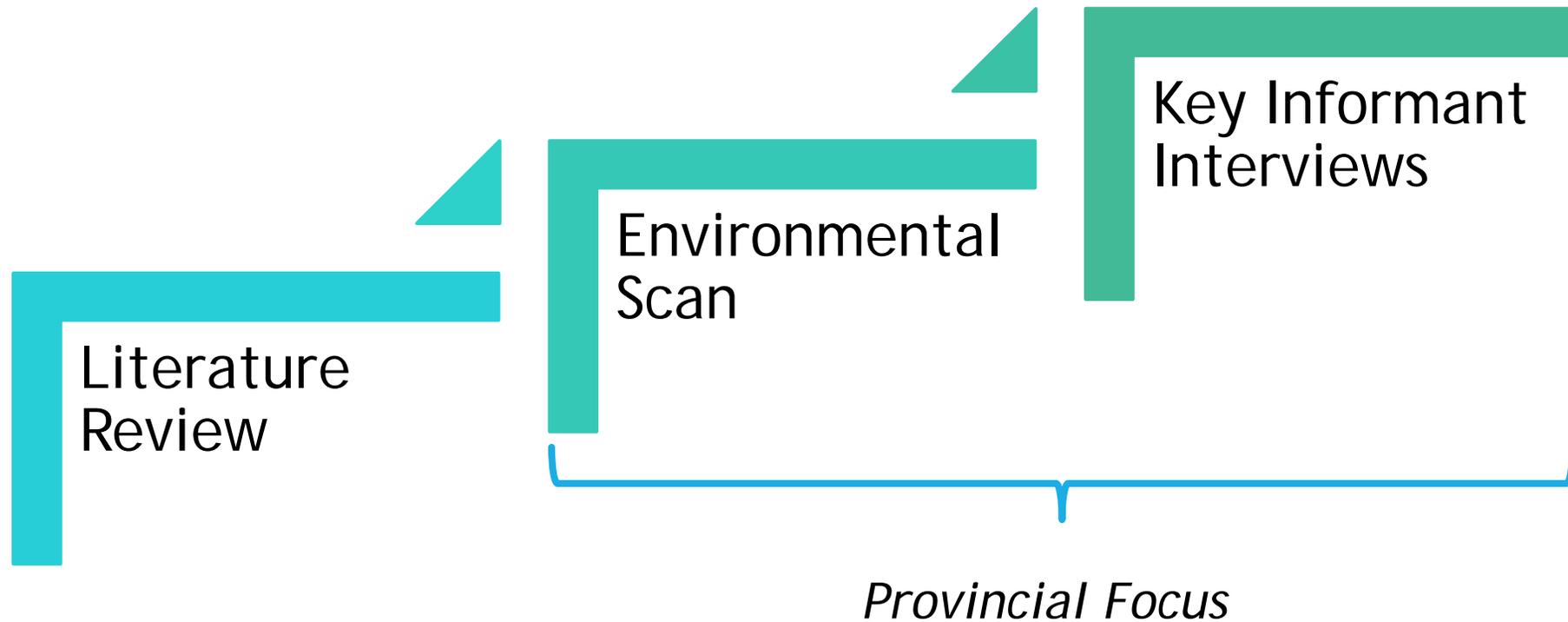
Research Questions

- ▶ What are the mental health experiences of resident doctors?
- ▶ What are the mental health service utilization patterns of resident doctors, specifically the facilitators and barriers to service utilization?
- ▶ What policies and programs can respond to the mental health service needs of resident doctors?

Research Objectives

- ▶ To elucidate the mental health experiences of resident doctors and characterize the **help-seeking behaviours** of resident doctors in relation to awareness and **utilization** of these services
- ▶ To generate knowledge that will facilitate the **development of mental health services for residents** and inform health and wellness directives at the educational and organizational level more broadly

Methodology - Overview



Provincial Case Study

- ▶ Single descriptive case study (Ontario) with embedded units (6 faculties of postgraduate medical education)



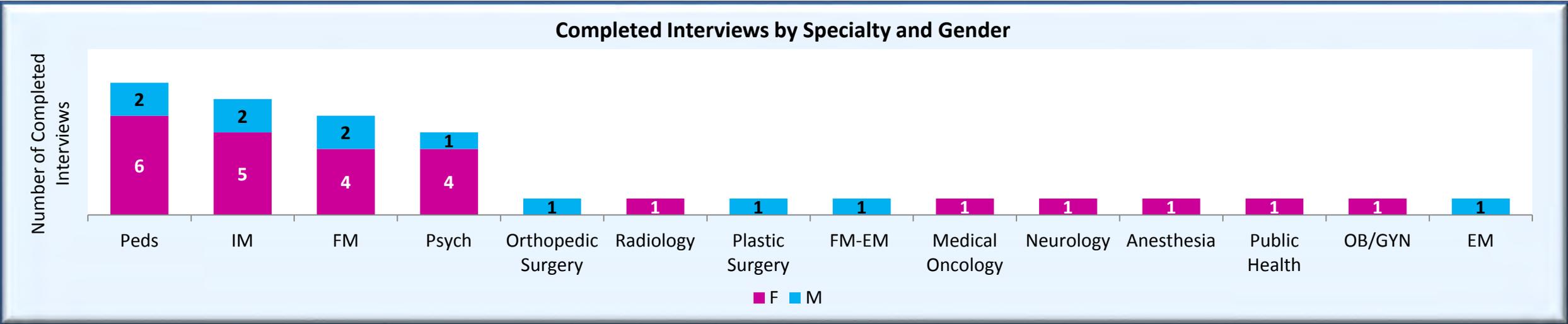
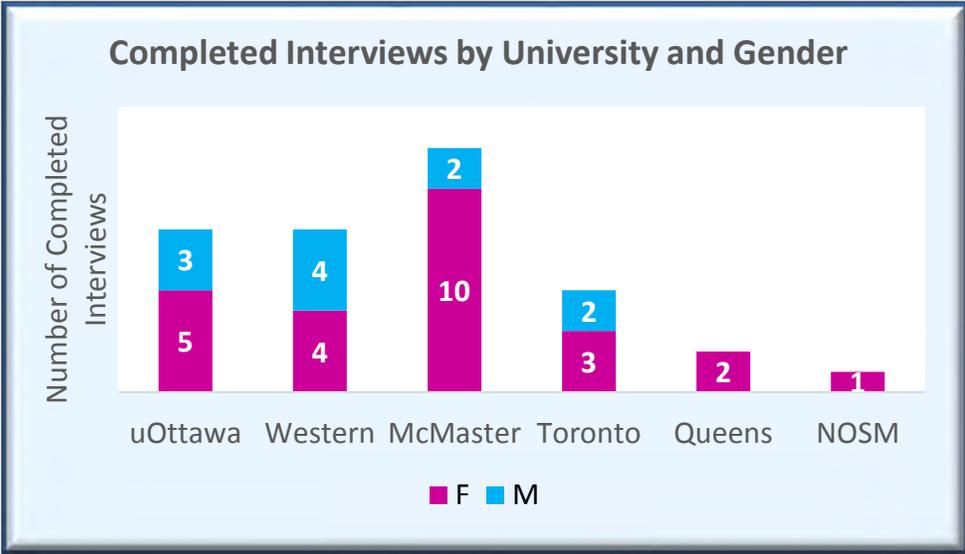
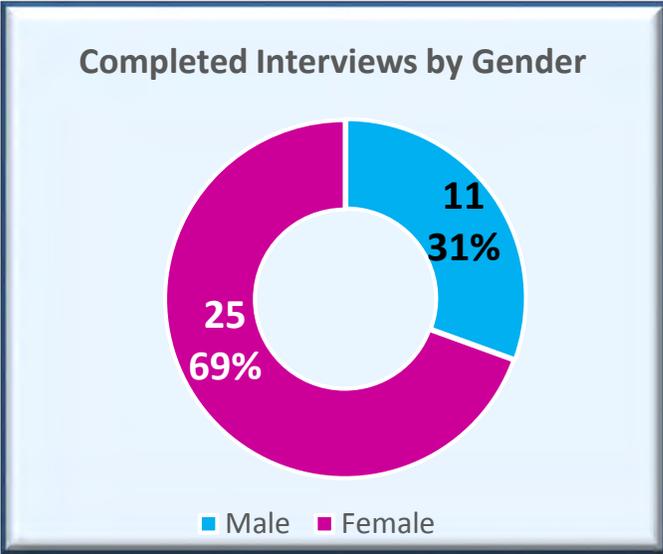
Resident Physician Interviews

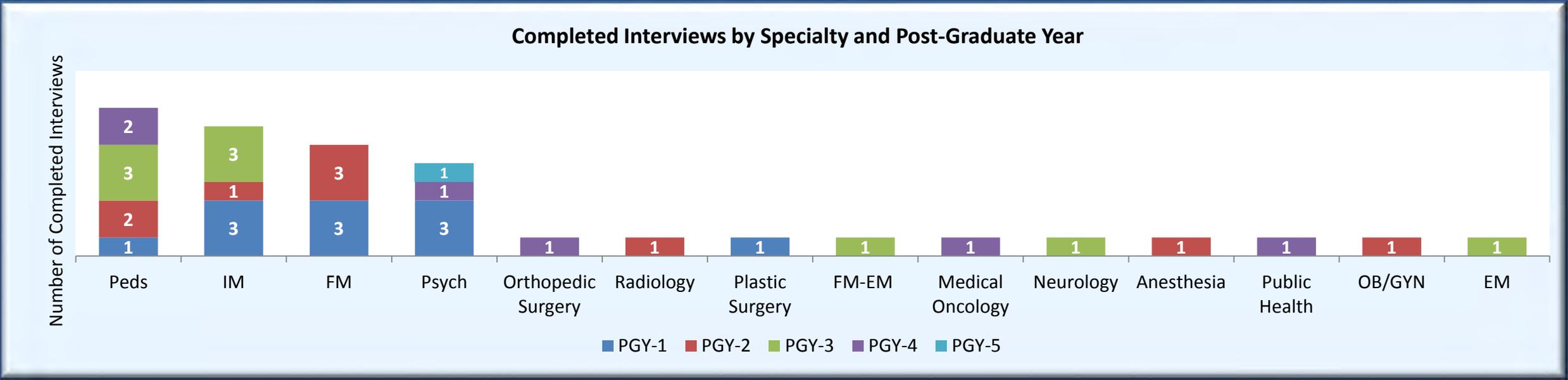
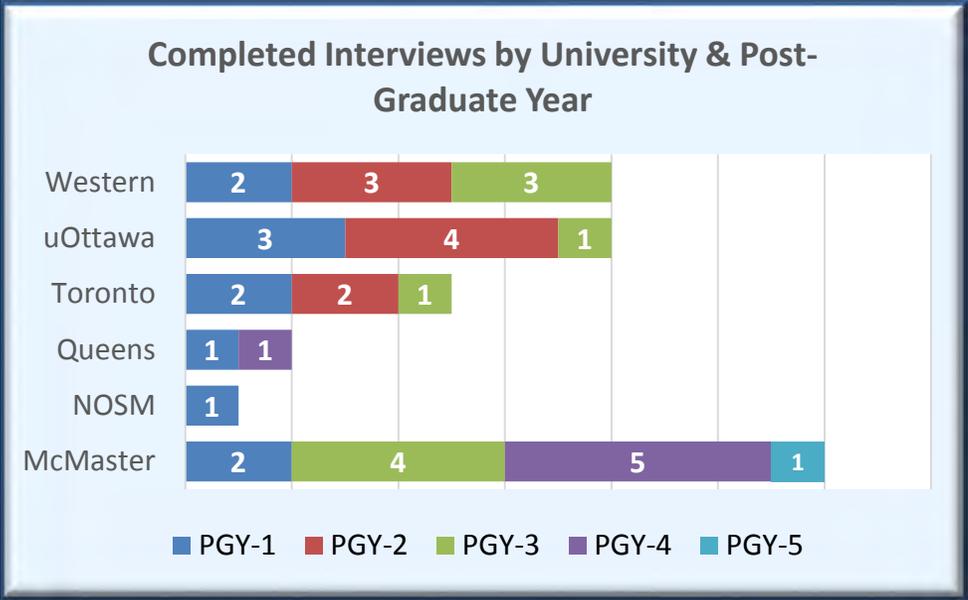
Sampling and Data collection

- ▶ Stratified purposive sampling of residents
 - ▶ Target of 12 interviews (2 residents from each of the 6 FOM (gender balanced))
 - ▶ Overall balance between broad disciplines and year of training
- ▶ Recruitment (*Local & Social*)
 - ▶ Offices of 6 Postgraduate Faculties of Medicine, Twitter, word of mouth
- ▶ In-depth semi-structured experiential interviews with resident doctors
 - ▶ audio recorded with verbatim transcription; augmented with interviewer notes

Preliminary Results

▶ Completed: 36 resident physician interviews





Mental Health Experiences

Anxiety

Isolation

Suicidal Ideation/
Suicide attempt

Stress

BURNOUT

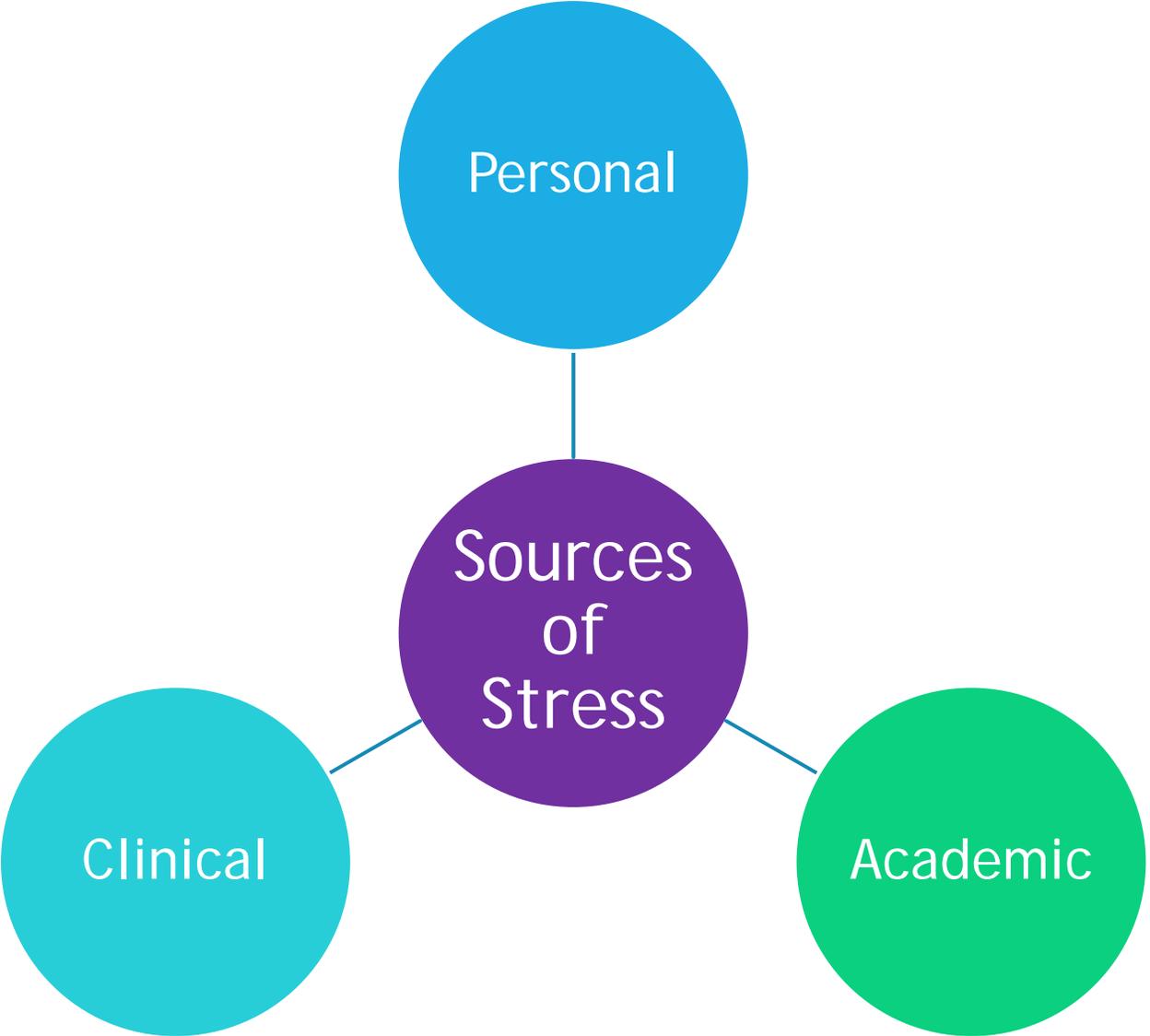
Fatigue

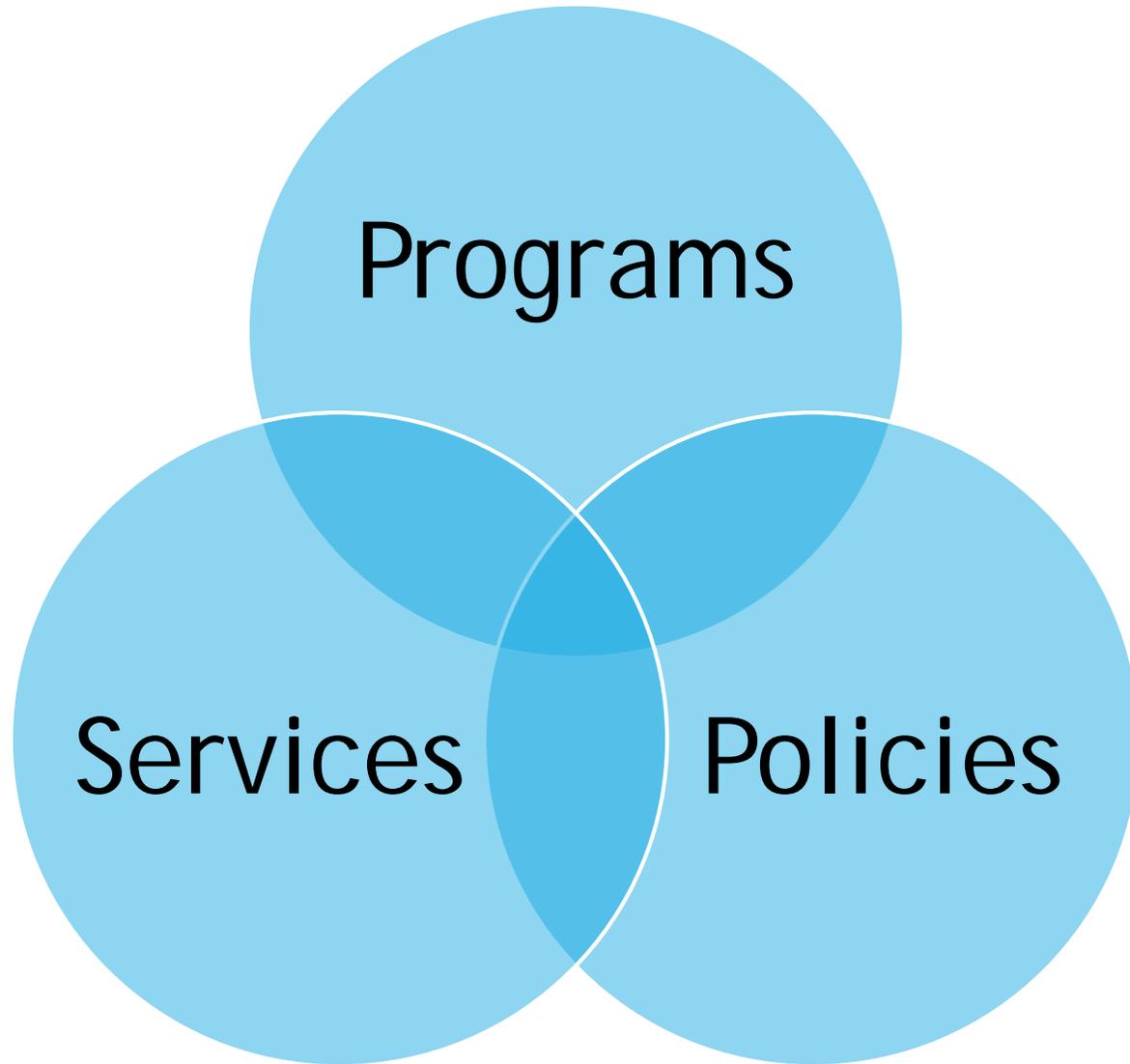
Substance abuse

Depression

Eating Disorders

Bipolar Disorder

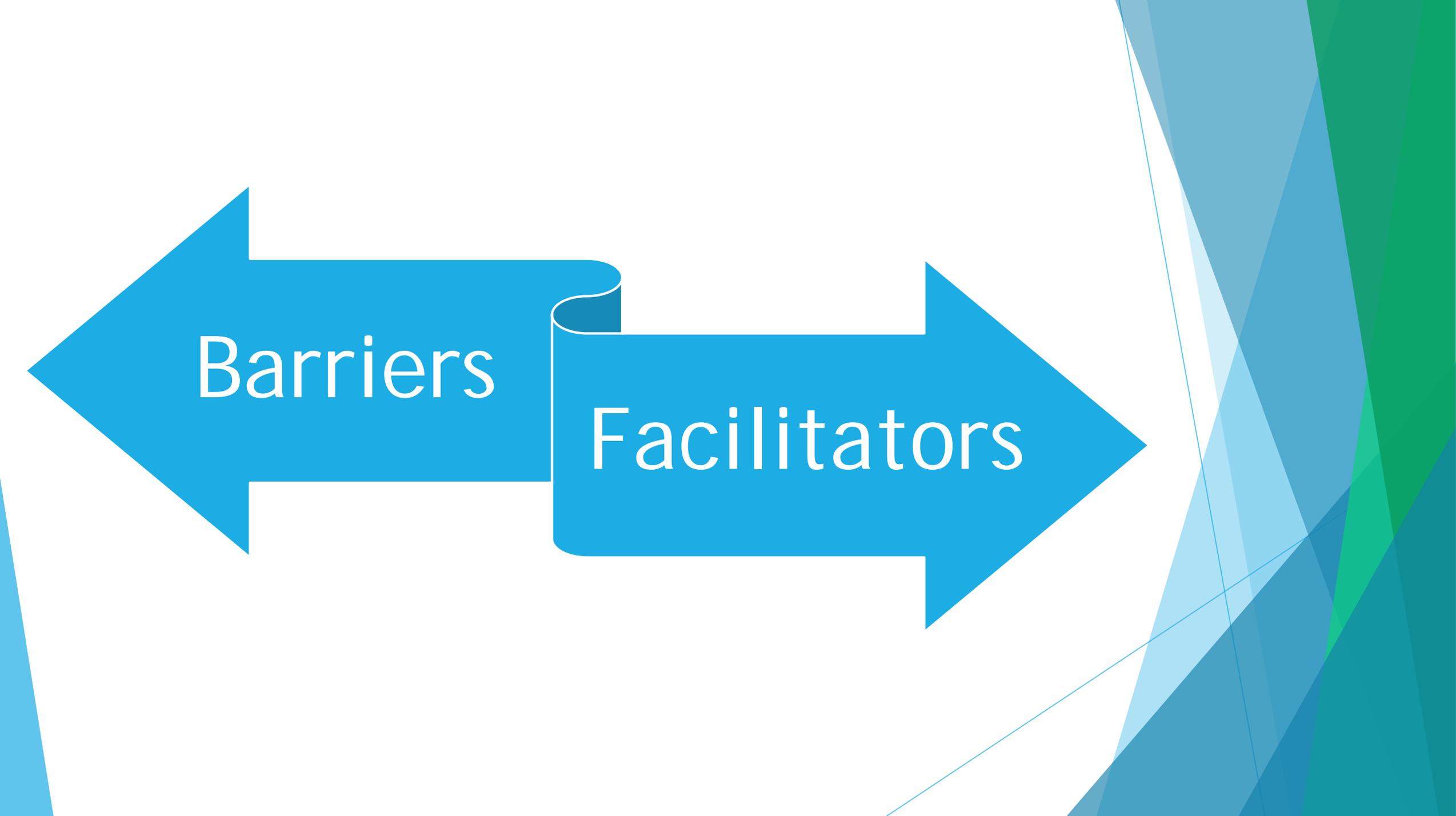




Programs

Services

Policies



Barriers

Facilitators

What about gender?



Considerations & Conclusions

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Questions?



Additional Slides

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Mental Health Experiences

- ▶ Specific mental health problems
 - ▶ Psychological distress, Stress, Anxiety, Burnout, Depression, Suicidal Ideation, Substance Abuse
- ▶ Broader experiences relating to mental health
 - ▶ Duty hours, time pressures, Intimidation, harassment, bullying

Types of Services

Focusing on formal services

- ▶ Preventative Strategies (program, sessions, workshops, seminars)
 - ▶ Counselling, mindfulness, resiliency, meditation, stress/anxiety reducing
- ▶ 'Reactive' Strategies/Programs (*counterproductive habits*)
 - ▶ Rehabilitation (alcohol/substance abuse)
 - ▶ Behavioral therapy (disruptive behaviour, bullying and harassment etc.)

Resident Physician Interview Guide

We are interested in the mental health experiences of resident physicians in Ontario and are exploring the mental health service utilization patterns of resident doctors. Of particular interest are the programs and policies that can respond to the mental health service needs of resident doctors. In this interview, we would like to hear about your experiences on the mental health issues among resident physicians and the perceived facilitators and barriers to utilization of mental health services. We are more specifically interested in the programs and policies that respond to the mental health service needs of resident doctors.

Mental Health Experiences

- ▶ What are the main mental health issues that you/or your colleagues in your program experience in general? (anxiety, burnout, depression, suicidal ideation, etc.)
- ▶ What are sources of stress that affect you/ or your colleagues mental wellbeing?
 - ▶ Personal factors?
 - ▶ In your role(s) as a student/(s) in post-graduate medical education?
 - ▶ In your role(s) as a care provider/(s) dealing with patients?

Programs/Policies/Services

- ▶ Are you aware of any programs, policies or services in your faculty of medicine, provincially or broadly where you or your colleagues could go to seek support for mental health issues?
 - ▶ If there are services available - would you/ or your colleagues consider using them?
- ▶ What would facilitate your use of these programs?
- ▶ What would you describe as barriers to seeking support for mental health issues as a resident physician?
- ▶ How do you think gender influences resident physicians when seeking help for mental health issues?
 - ▶ How do the services and programs respond to mental health issues with residents of different genders?

Key Informant Interview Guide

We are interested in the mental health experiences of resident physicians in Ontario and are exploring the mental health service utilization patterns of resident doctors. Of particular interest are the programs and policies that can respond to the mental health service needs of resident doctors.

- ▶ Are there any programs/services at your postgraduate faculty of medicine for resident physicians struggling with mental health issues?
- ▶ How are these programs made accessible to residents?
- ▶ What services do these programs offer?

If they do have a program, probe further to get an understanding of the structure and services provided to residents.

- ▶ On average (providing an estimate) how many resident physicians use your services?
 - ▶ In a month
 - ▶ In a year
 - ▶ Is there a particular time of year when there are more residents (*such as during the Royal College exams period*)
- ▶ What mental health issues/conditions are 'treated' /seen by your service.

Stakeholder Interview Guide

We are interested in the mental health experiences of resident physicians in Ontario and are exploring the mental health service utilization patterns of resident doctors. Of particular interest are the programs and policies that can respond to the mental health service needs of resident doctors. In this interview, we would like to hear about your experiences and expertise on the mental health issues among resident physicians and their perceived facilitators and barriers to utilization of mental health services. We are more specifically interested in the programs and policies that respond to the mental health service needs of resident doctors.

- ▶ From your perspective, what are the most pressing mental health issues facing resident physicians?
 - ▶ Probe about personal, educational, and work contexts
 - ▶ Probe about the types of mental health issue (e.g., stress, burnout, addiction, depression, anxiety and other mental health issues).
- ▶ Are you aware of interventions (e.g., policies, practices or programs) that help to address these mental health issues, more broadly?
 - ▶ Probe: What is the focus of the intervention after it is described (i.e., the individual or the working conditions)

Gendered Experiences of Return to Work (if not raised already in the probes above)

- ▶ Do you think mental health experiences vary for male and female resident doctors? (considering the current feminization within the profession)
 - ▶ If so, how?
 - ▶ If not, why not?