

CMA STATEMENT ON PHYSICIAN HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Guiding Principles and Commitments for a Vibrant Profession

What It Is

This statement identifies a set of guiding principles and commitments to promote a vibrant and engaged profession by identifying key factors that promote healthy training and practice environments with the view to enhancing physicians' sense of fulfillment and engagement. This statement affirms that all physicians should have access to robust health and wellness services and supports to address any personal and professional difficulties they may experience.

Why It matters

Physician health and wellness is a critical issue for all physicians, their patients, and health systems. Physicians are at a higher risk of experiencing adverse health outcomes, including personal and professional dissatisfaction, burnout, depression, suicidal ideation and suicide. This has been shown to affect patient care and health system performance. Addressing the factors that affect physician health and the challenges that physicians face in navigating their increasingly complex training and practice environments has become a policy and practice imperative.

If meaningful, sustained improvements are to be achieved, the profession and other stakeholders will need to make deliberate commitments to reduce personal, cultural, and occupational barriers and to promote behaviours, practice, and conditions that optimize health and wellness. The CMA is committed to promoting a model of shared responsibility targeting individual and systemic factors that influence and contribute to health and wellness, through advocacy and collaboration. This Statement is based on the [CMA Policy on Physician Health](#) and [Background Document](#).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A broader understanding of physician health

In the past, addressing physician health often focused on individual issues. Today, our understanding encompasses the complex range of individual, socio-cultural, occupational, and systemic factors and includes efforts to develop preventive measures and treatments to address these issues. This new understanding enables us to look at physician health more broadly to take into account, and seek to address, the array of factors that influence medical training and practice.

Physician health as a quality indicator

Physician health and wellness outcomes are becoming a significant quality indicator in the practice of medicine and the overall functioning of health systems. Physician health has been identified as an additional component of the "Triple Aim," renamed the "Quadruple Aim," which seeks to optimize health systems performance through enhancing the patient experience, improving population health, reducing costs, and supporting physician wellness.

Physician health as a shared responsibility

It is increasingly recognized that the complex range of factors that contribute to health and wellness need to be addressed at both the individual and systemic levels. While initiatives targeted to individual physicians remain relevant, there needs to be a greater focus on occupational and system-level initiatives and collaboration between stakeholders and physicians to produce meaningful and sustainable change, in a model of shared responsibility.

KEY COMMITMENTS TO PROMOTE PHYSICIAN HEALTH AND WELLNESS

FOR THE PROFESSION

Commitment to fostering a culture of wellness



- Addressing and eliminating the stigma around health and wellness issues with training and practice environments by normalizing help-seeking behaviour and promoting psychological safety.
- Taking responsibility for enabling behaviours, actions, policies, and organizational practices that contribute to a positive culture; addressing the barriers that prevent physicians from seeking health and intervention; and helping physicians better support and/or treat colleagues in distress.
- Collaborating to develop and promote individual- and system-level initiatives that emphasize a healthy training and practice culture.
- Promoting shared values of civility, integrity, reciprocity and respect and the importance of physicians' sense of fulfillment and engagement.

FOR SYSTEMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Commitment to developing and promoting occupational and system supports



- Increasing awareness of existing health and wellness services and supports; and eliminating cultural and institutional barriers to accessing these.
- Enhancing the range of, and improving access to, continuing medical education and strengthening accreditation standards related to health and wellness.
- Developing occupational strategies, processes, and emerging technologies that enable physicians to provide high-quality patient care without excessive work and time burdens.
- Encouraging the adoption of workplace standards for physicians that recognize occupational health standards like those afforded to other Canadian workers.
- Fostering an environment where physicians seeking intervention for their health are not prevented from working because of the mere presence of illness or act of seeking care if they are safely engaging in professional activities.

FOR INDIVIDUALS

Commitment to self-care and peer support



- Valuing one's personal health and wellness and modelling self-care as part of one's responsibilities under the CanMEDS Professional Role, including exhibiting self-awareness and managing influences on one's personal well-being and professional performance; and promoting a training and practice culture that recognizes, supports, and responds effectively to colleagues in need.
- Recognizing and responding to distress or illness in oneself and in colleagues; and cultivating self-management strategies.
- Promoting a training and practice culture that encourages help-seeking behaviours, and maintenance of physical, mental, and social well-being.
- Recognizing the role leaders play in shaping training and practice culture through the implicit and explicit ways in which they communicate core values; and supporting emerging champions in health and wellness.

**A broadened
understanding of
health and wellness**

**Physician health as
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Fostering a culture of wellness



**Developing and promoting
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Promoting self-care and support