

Medical Board of Australia consultation on the funding of external doctors' health programs

Submission received from: **Name withheld**

Question 1: Is there a need for health programs?

Do you see any value in, or need for external health programs for medical students and/or doctors? Please explain your reasoning

Yes. Doctors neglect their own health way too often and some don't even have their own GP.

An independent health program for medical professionals/students helps overcome inhibitions within our own ranks to seek help and can help address specific questions/ needs for this group.

Given the specific stress factors for medical professionals (dealing with death/dying, high expectations to perform from society and within own ranks, poor supervision/ debriefing mechanisms for psychologically challenging situations etc.), there definitely is a need for such a program. Preventing doctors from turning to "the bottle" or other substances for "relief" would be the ultimate achievement, meanwhile VDHP was at least a reliable place to turn to when things have gone wrong that is non-judgemental and able to provide specific help with professional face-to-face follow-up.

Question 2: Preferred model for external health programs

Of the existing models in Australia as described above, is there a model that you would prefer to see adopted nationally? Is there an alternative model that you would like to see adopted nationally?

VDHP

Question 3: The role of the Board in funding external health programs

Do you believe that it is the role of the Board to fund external health programs?

Government resources would be appropriate, too, since healthy and mentally strong doctors can provide better service to the community.

Question 4: Range of services provided by doctors' health programs

What services should be provided by doctors' health programs. In addition to the ones you have selected, what other services (if any) should be provided by doctors' health programs?

Telephone advice during office hours

Telephone advice available 24/7

Referral to expert practitioners for assessment and management

Develop and maintain a list of practitioners who are willing to treat colleagues

Education services for medical practitioners and medical students to raise awareness of health issues for the medical profession and to encourage practitioners and students to have a general practitioner

Programs to enhance the skills of medical practitioners who assess and manage the health of doctors

Case management and monitoring (including workplace monitoring) the progress of those who voluntarily enter into Case Management agreements (or similar) with the service

Follow up of all participants contacting or attending the service

Assistance in finding support for re-entry to work and rehabilitation

Research on doctors' health issues

Publication of resources – maintaining a website, newsletters, journal articles

Question 5: Funding

How much of an increase in registration fees is acceptable to you, to fund doctors' health services?

>\$40

Question 6: Other comments

Do you have any other comments or feedback about external health programs?