

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

Submission received from: **Dr Gary Galambos**

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

The loss of a doctor from the system who could be assisted to recovery and sustained remission, with support and assistance, is a huge opportunity cost of as valuable and expensive resource. Doctors cost the community substantially to educate and train so it is an investment to ensure they are functioning adequately and able to continue to practice for the benefit of the community. It makes sense for society to invest in prevention and early intervention programs.

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?

All the models sound like they have features that would be beneficial. At the minimum I would like to see a group of doctors in each State who administer a program that has prevention and early intervention components. Educating public and private sector health organisations, including area health services and universities, should be part of the remit. Providing phone support and advice lines appears to be an important and well utilised service. The VDHP model does sound very comprehensive and would be an ideal goal but the cost sounds quite high and so a balance between cost and benefit needs to be determined.

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?

I do as The Board receives funding for medical registration, which places it in an ideal position to fund such programs.

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 available 24/7

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

Follow up of all participants contacting or attending the service

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

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?