

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

Submission received from: **David Brumley**

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

Doctors face particular problems in accessing help for psychological problems and especially for substance use problems due to concerns about public disgrace and also shame in admitting these problems to fellow doctors. This leads to reluctance to get care, and it is clear that appropriate care results very often in effective rehabilitation and return to the workplace. These problems of access can only be overcome by the provision of a point of entry to care that is widely understood by doctors and students to be safe and effective.

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?

I would prefer the VDHP model, as it provides a safe and reassuring entry point to care and referral, and the ongoing planned recovery support needed.

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?

Yes. The Board is the easiest and most appropriate point at which to access the required funding and assess the results of treatment.

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

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?

They are an essential need for many doctors and students who would otherwise not recover, leading to personal tragedy and to lost expertise.