

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

There is definite value for external health programs for doctors and medical students as it encourages doctors to present earlier and without fear of referral to the regulation agency.

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?

The preferred model is VDHP. The approach must be multifaceted. There needs to be dedicated staff to respond face to face in a crisis situation and to initiate instant referral. Follow-up and case management is important as often presentations are recurrent and early intervention prevents full relapse. Ongoing education is important as there is an 'iceberg' effect of unrepresented cases and there is a need to de-stigmatise mental illness.

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, this is good preventative medicine. A little money spent keeps doctors working and is more cost-effective than training new doctors.

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?

\$25 - \$40

Question 6: Other comments

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

I have used VDHP for over 10 years. Prior to their existence, it was difficult to access help. Similar to Beyond Blue, they have contributed to de-stigmatising mental illness. The ongoing case management has allowed me to continue practicing.