

THE PROBLEM

Physicians are not immune from health problems. Indeed, one practitioner out of 10 will face a life-threatening illness during his or her career. Among the most serious threats to practitioner health are alcoholism and dependence on other substances. Without proper treatment, this condition can jeopardize health and well-being, disrupt families, and ruin careers.

Many practitioners cannot confront their own health problems. Instead, they deny their symptoms out of a sense of omnipotence, thus making acknowledgement more difficult. Similarly many practitioners who know of an ill colleague are reluctant to confront, not for lack of caring, but because they are unaware of the resources and probability of success.

THE SOLUTION

Vermont Practitioner Health Program (VPHP) is designed to help practitioners. Studies show that practitioners can recover from the illness of substance abuse and resume normal personal, professional, and social lives. Recovery rates from addiction for medical practitioners are actually higher than for most other occupations.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY

- Recognition as early as possible
- Expert intervention designed to encourage the physician to seek help.
- Appropriate and compassionate treatment by professionals experienced in treating practitioners.
- Close, ongoing supervision through regular liaison with VPHP, monitoring for relapse to substance abuse, and compliance with treatment.
- Advocacy with employers, colleagues, and licensure agencies.

CONTACT VPHP

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VERMONT PRACTITIONER HEALTH PROGRAM



A HEALTH SERVICE OF THE
VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY

Help is available for physicians, podiatrists, physician assistants, radiology assistants and anesthesiology assistants with substance abuse problems.

A confidential program designed and administered by practitioners, for practitioners.

VERMONT PRACTITIONER HEALTH PROGRAM

The Vermont Practitioner Health Program (VPHP) is a health service of the Vermont Medical Society (VMS). Its primary purpose is to protect the public by the early identification, treatment and rehabilitation of individual providers of health services who are impaired or at risk for impairment by the excessive use of drugs, including alcohol.

Physicians (including M.D.s and D.O.s), podiatrists and physician assistants are eligible to participate.

VPHP's efforts are led by Medical Director Suzanne Parker, M.D., a board certified addictionologist who evaluates all referred professionals and manages clinical operations. Program Administrator Colleen Magne handles the day-to-day administrative operations. The program is also co-managed by the Case Management Team, whose members include a diverse group of physicians and podiatrists.

Referrals come from colleagues, family members, friends, or patients, as well as self-referrals. Each referral is treated individually, in a compassionate and confidential manner.

Communications with VPHP are confidential under state law, and chemical dependency cases have additional protections under federal law.

Participation with VPHP is voluntary. VPHP will strongly urge a practitioner who is ill to obtain evaluation and treatment, and we will suggest specific treatment options. We respond to the concerns of families, colleagues, and hospitals by providing coordinated interventions and referrals to treatment.

VPHP provides ongoing, confidential support for recovery from alcoholism and substance abuse, including referral, liaison with colleagues, recovery monitoring and documentation. We provide advocacy for return to the practice of medicine.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF OR A COLLEAGUE WHO MIGHT SUFFER FROM A SUBSTANCE ABUSE ILLNESS

If you or a colleague suffers from an alcohol or other drug dependency illness, the VERMONT PRACTITIONER HEALTH PROGRAM can be a valuable, confidential resource. The sooner a diagnosis is made and treatment is initiated, the better the prognosis. In many cases willingness to acknowledge one's own problem, or the courage to act on concerns about a colleague, leads to recovery before a practitioner's skill and medical practice are compromised.

Like anyone else, physicians who avoid treatment for alcoholism and other drug dependencies face serious deterioration. Meanwhile, families are destroyed, licenses to practice are revoked, reputations are ruined, and financial security may be lost. Our experience with recovering practitioners has been very encouraging. It confirms published reports that successful recovery of physicians far exceeds that of the general population.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VERMONT BOARD OF MEDICAL PRACTICE

VPHP is independent of the Vermont Board of Medical Practice. However, documentation of participation in and compliance with our monitoring program can be essential in helping to restore and/or maintain licensure.

Under the Protocol adopted by both the Vermont Board of Medical Practice and VMS, VPHP is not required to disclose to the Board the identity of participants except where there is injury, or the risk of injury to a patient, a criminal act, relapse to the use of alcohol or drugs, or other failures by the participant to abide by their monitoring contract with VPHP. VPHP frequently works in coordination with the Vermont Board of Medical Practice.

VPHP has been established as a peer review program of the society. Under Vermont law, peer review activities of the program are confidential.

PRACTITIONERS NEED NOT SUFFER WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE. HELP IS AVAILABLE AND IT WORKS.

THE CONFIDENTIAL NUMBER IS
802-223-0400