



The UBC Resident Wellness Office Response to Suicide and Sudden Deaths Proposed Communication Guideline

Within 24 hours of hearing of death/incident:

- The Associate Dean of PGME is notified and then calls a meeting of the senior leadership team to craft and implement an appropriate strategy to co-ordinate actions and communications:
 - Associate Dean - PGME Office (Dr. Ravi Sidhu)
 - Program Director(s)
 - Resident Wellness Counsellor | Program Lead (Rebecca Turnbull)
- Communication and immediate outreach to the survivors (family) will come from the highest possible official within UBC Faculty of Medicine (or whomever was working most closely with Resident before their death – if applicable)
**Communication to be clear, consistent and compassionate*
 - Collaboration with family around language used for communication
 - Distance, if requested, will be respected.
 - An offer of connection to clinical or spiritual & other support services will be made (RWO, PHP, EFAP)
- Director of communications for UBC Faculty of Medicine is made aware of situation and offers recommendations for strategies.
- Communicate with University Provost office to lower flags at half-mast
- The appropriate amount of time granted off clinical duties for cohort of the learners' class/program is organized in collaboration with the program's director and UBC's Faculty of Medicine. (Residents in other cohorts / programs who have been on rotation, or some other form of training with the deceased may also need time off).
 - This can be a time for peer support, self-care and reflection.
- Debriefing groups are organized. These groups will be coordinated and/or facilitated by Resident Wellness Counsellor (s). If outside of the lower mainland, accommodations will be made for travel and or connections with local community resources.
 - Debriefs will happen **first** in small groups (cohort/program and those similarly affected). Offer two sessions to ensure as many as possible can attend.
 - Discussion (large) groups for all learners/residents in UBC Medicine are made available.
- The following groups will be informed and offered support:
 - The cohort/program of the learner/resident
 - All students & residents within UBC Faculty of Medicine (including distributed sites)
- The following groups will be made aware of the situation:
 - The College of Physicians and Surgeons
 - The Executive Associate Dean of Medicine UBC (Dr. Roger Wong)



- The Associate Dean of Student Affairs (Dr. Janette McMillan)
- Supervisors and teachers in hospitals (to support residents/learners who may show signs distress)
- Chief Residents & Senior Residents may be called upon – (ensure they are equipped with resources, and reminded of boundary issues, briefed on where to refer colleagues they are concerned about etc.)
- Members of UBC Faculty of Medicine (employees)
- UBC Counselling Services director (Cheryl Washburn: cheryl.washburn@ubc.ca)
- UBC Office Religious and Spiritual Life:
(<http://students.ubc.ca/livewell/topics/spirituality/chaplains>)
- Physician Health Program: Phone: 604-398-4300
- Employee and Family Assistance Program: Phone: 604-872-4929
- Resident Doctors of BC
- *The director of Communications of the Faculty of Medicine is the first contact in all responses to media.*

Near Future/Days following the event:

- If appropriate, a UBC representative will be present at the funeral
- A ritual for the community at the University such a moment of silence will occur.
- Educational interventions for trainees and Faculty on physician health will be made available
- A follow up debrief will be organized through the Resident Wellness Office or an external facilitator for residents, as needed.

Disclaimer:

It is normal for people to be distressed by the suicide & death of a colleague and to have transient reactions such as rumination, sleeplessness, anxiety, anger and sadness. Resilience and recovery are the norm and the vast majority of people will be able to cope effectively with the loss, often aided by the support of their peer group and a memorial activity in relation to the deceased (ceremony, tribute to the deceased (scholarship, fund, etc.). Nonetheless, some people can have prolonged distress and may require additional interventions like counselling to recover from the event.

Additional Resources

- The UBC Resident Wellness Office
<http://postgrad.med.ubc.ca/resident-wellness/>
- Physician Health Program:
www.physicianhealth.com
- SAFER BC: 604-675-3985
- Recovering emotionally from a disaster:
<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>
- Employee & Family Assistance Program: 604-872-4929