

# **IMPAIRMENT POLICY**

## **PREAMBLE – GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Residents shall be considered to be impaired when they are unable to practice medicine with skill and judgement. The focus of this policy is in particular impairment due to psychiatric illness and/or chemical dependency.

The Office of Postgraduate Medical Education through the Housestaff Well-being Committee will offer its assistance to all residents experiencing problems which affect their well-being or their job performance, regardless of the origin of such problems.

All information about individuals will be held in the strictest confidence by service providers, within the limits established by the laws of Canada and of Alberta, and having in addition due regard for the Canadian Medical Association/Alberta Medical Association Code of Ethics.

## **PROGRAM**

- 2.1 The services of the Employee Assistance Program of the Capital Health Authority or other resources deemed appropriate by the Housestaff Well-being Committee will be employed by the Office of Postgraduate Medical Education.

In some instances, the extent of impairment may be so great as to constitute an immediate danger to patients. Such instances should be dealt with by the appropriate hospital and faculty administrative officers who are urged to contact the Alberta Medical Association Physician and Family Support Program. In all instances of such gravity as to require administrative action, a report shall be made to the Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Province of Alberta, indicating temporary absence from training.

- 2.2 The Associate Dean for PGME will require residents, reliably identified as being impaired, to obtain formal assessment and/or treatment. Ministry funded residents will be supported financially by medical leave with pay during necessary absence for a period of up to 90 days. Non-Ministry funded residents or fellows will be similarly supported, subject to explicit restrictions from the funding agency involved.

## **RETURN TO WORK**

- 4.1 These formal guidelines will apply in cases of more severe and progressive impairment such as chemical dependency or major psychiatric illness. A formal after-care contract must be laid down in writing and agreed to by the returning resident. The following points will be included as appropriate:

The recovering resident agrees:

- 4.1.1 To provide documentation from the treating physician that appropriate treatment has been given and that return to practice is indicated.
- 4.1.2 To provide documentation of ongoing compliance with all aspects of the treatment and recovery program.
- 4.1.3 To abstain from all drugs that are not accepted by the treatment team as part of the recovery program.
- 4.1.4 To participate in the chemical screening program of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta.

- 4.1.5 To meet with a physician monitor at specified intervals for a sufficient time to allow observation of the recovering physician's behavior.
- 4.1.6 To allow free and open communication between the treating physician, the recovery support network and those persons responsible for verifying compliance with the re-entry agreement.
- 4.1.7 To return immediately to medical leave status if terms of the agreement are not met.
- 4.1.8 To participate in a regular review of the agreement, and to modify it as necessary to accomplish therapeutic goals.
  
- 4.2 The Office of Postgraduate Medical Education agrees:
  - 4.2.1 That, upon return to duties, residents will be judged on performance criteria only and the fact per se of impairment and its treatment will not be considered in evaluations or in contract renewals.
  - 4.2.2 That all Program Directors and Faculty will comply with this policy and, in instances when such compliance is doubtful, the Associate Dean for Postgraduate Medical Education will investigate and, if necessary, act as an advocate for the returning resident.

#### **MONITORING**

- 4.3 Monitoring functions will be carried out by the Continuing Care Committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Province of Alberta.
- 4.4 All residents returning from treatment will be required to participate fully in the aftercare activities of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Province of Alberta.
- 4.5 In the event of noncompliance or continued impairment the Continuing Care Committee will make a full report to the Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Province of Alberta, who will inform the Program Director and the Associate Dean for Postgraduate Medical Education.

*Approved PGME Council 5 March 2001*