

McMaster Pediatrics Resident Support Network

McMaster Pediatrics residents work and learn in an environment with high performance and professional expectations. The goal of the Resident Support Network is to ensure that residents also experience a high degree of support so they have the skills and resilience to meet those expectations and thrive in residency programs.

McMaster Pediatrics and the Resident Support Network are committed to promoting wellness for all residents, and to supporting residents who are struggling with various issues that may impact their work and life outside of work. Our goal is to promote readily-available support from resident peers, faculty, and program administrators. Many residents already access these individuals in an informal way, and we want to be able to provide the training and resources to these supporters to best support residents in need.

Our goal is to create a network for residents in need of support. This will include a group of residents, faculty and administrators who can be contacted for one-on-one support, as well as monthly group debriefing sessions called 'Treats and Talks', each lead by one of our resident peer supporters

Why Support Networks?

Peers: Residents who are struggling may feel more comfortable approaching other residents as a first point of contact. Fellow residents are often identified as the most effective source of confidential support. Peers are seen to be more approachable and more understanding of problems because they share a common experience. Most peers are not responsible for assessing each other formally. Dealing with issues in conversation with peers may prevent future crises.

Administrators: Our program administrators have frequent contact from residents looking for emotional support and wellness resources. These administrators have resident support in their job description and frequently solve work-related problems so residents naturally gravitate towards them.

Faculty: Faculty members and program directors are responsible for resident assessment so there are natural barriers to help-seeking. However, with this model, faculty will be identified as approachable for confidential support. Many faculty members have a strong interest in promoting resident wellness, and can help support residents in distress perhaps in a different way than their peers.

Ultimately residents will approach the individual with whom they feel the strongest non-judgmental connection.

Resident, Faculty and Administrator Resident Supporters

Residents will benefit from a defined and identifiable network of supporters made up of individuals with special attributes and expertise. Residents will benefit most from supporters who are available, approachable, unhurried and calm in addition to being helpful, empathetic and non-judgmental.

Supporters in the network should possess the following skills:

- Interpersonal skills such as active listening
- Solution focused and other problem-solving strategies
- Risk assessment
- Crisis management

Through participation in the network, supporters will gain knowledge in the following areas:

- The resident experience
- How to identify the resident at risk
- The Postgraduate process for enhanced learning, remediation, probation and appeals (and where to access this information)
- The Postgraduate process for accommodations (and where to access this information)
- Intimidation & Harassment policy
- What to do in the event of occupational injury
- The PARO Collective Agreement
- How to access resident wellness resources:
 - Primary care
 - Allied health providers
 - Community resources
 - Employee and Family Assistance Program
 - OMA Physician Health Program
 - Employee benefits
 - PARO Help-line
 - Local crisis services
 - Local supports in distributed sites

Responsibilities

Members of the Residency Support Network will be expected to:

- Be available to respond to emails, talk by phone or meet face to face within a reasonable timeframe when requested by a resident seeking assistance (suggested response within 24 hours, with auto-reply on email while away)
- Provide brief advice to residents in need

- Refer residents to program, school and community resources
- Refer significant personal health problems or systemic issues to the program ombudsperson
- Ensure resident and patient safety and refer to Crisis Services when necessary
- Adhere to the confidentiality policy
- Follow-up

Supporters will be appointed for a term of one year with the option to extend.

Selection

Resident Selection: A call for applications will be sent to all residents in July of each year. Interested residents will be asked to submit a short application expressing their interest. Preference may be given to residents to ensure representation over all PGY levels.

Faculty Selection: Faculty with a known interest in resident wellness will be contacted and encouraged to volunteer as resident supporters.

Administrators: All program coordinators will be invited to volunteer as resident supporters.

Training

Resident supporters will be expected to attend an annual, full day, face-to-face workshop. If the resident supporter has previously attended a workshop and will be continuing in the role, they will still be encouraged to attend annually, with a minimum attendance of every 2 years.

The event will include interactive educational sessions to help participants develop the knowledge and skills to be successful in their role. Sessions may include:

- Accounts of wellness experiences in residency
- Description of resident supporter role and accountabilities
- How to identify and approach the at-risk resident
- An overview of the Physician Health Program services for residents
- A summary of the PARO Collective Agreement, extended health benefits, and help-line services
- Crisis management training
- A review of policies related to wellness such as Intimidation & Harassment, Safety, and Remediation
- How to provide direct support to residents using group-based scenarios
- How to foster a positive training environment
- Confidential debriefing process

Budget

The Resident Supporter role is a volunteer role. Costs will pertain to the annual training session and will include venue, food and possibly fees for guest speakers. There is also a budget to provide food for each 'Treats and Talks' session.

Currently, the program is being supported by the McMaster Pediatrics Residency Program, with future funding as the program expands to possibly include contributions from the Department of Pediatrics, PGME Wellness, grants from third parties and philanthropic contributions.

Evaluation

An exit survey will be sent at the end of each academic year to all McMaster Pediatric Residents. This will explore perceived resident support, as well as what resources they found useful. Specific questions will be asked regarding experience with the Resident Support Network.

Data will also be collected from each 'Treats and Talks' session, specifically how many were in attendance, and what some of the general themes of the discussion were.

Resident supporters will also be asked to provide information about their experience in the role at the end of their term.

Contact Information

The 2019/2020 term will be run by our resident leads Michelle D'Alessandro (michelle.dalessandro@medportal.ca), Tasha Stoltz (tasha.stoltz@medportal.ca), our PGME Wellness Counsellor Lisa Giles (gilesl2@mcmaster.ca) and our faculty advisor Dr. Dave Lysecki (lyseckdl@mcmaster.ca) with support from recent MacPeds graduate Meredith Austin-Appleton (meredith.austin-appleton@medportal.ca)

Created with the help and guidance of Dr. Dellavedova and NOSM Post-graduate Wellness Program