

***PHYSICIAN
WELL-BEING
COMMITTEE***

**OBTAINING HELP
for
IMPAIRMENT**



**A GUIDE FOR
PHYSICIANS,
PHYSICIANS' FAMILIES
AND FRIENDS**

*Humboldt-Del Norte
County Medical Society*

in conjunction with:

*St. Joseph, Mad River Community,
Redwood Memorial, Sutter Coast and
Jerold Phelps Community Hospitals*

PHYSICIAN WELL-BEING COMMITTEE

This brochure has been designed to provide an understanding of the well-being of physicians committee and the tools to obtain assistance or information when a physician's ability to practice medicine becomes impaired.

Impairment rarely affects the impaired individual alone. Patients, colleagues, friends, and families are frequently drawn into a circle of difficulties either because of their dependence on the physician or because of a desire to help him or her.

While this brochure is intended primarily to explain the Physician Well-Being Committee to physicians, we hope that it will also be of use to others who care about physicians.

What Is It?

The Physician Well-Being Committee is a group of physicians representing the Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society, Mad River Community Hospital, Redwood Memorial Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, Sutter Coast Hospital and Jerold Phelps Community Hospital. The PWB Committee was formed to assist physicians who are experiencing problems that might impair their medical judgement or performance. The Committee has two primary and equally weighed responsibilities:

1. To aid physicians in recognizing and treating health problems that either could or do adversely affect their ability to practice medicine. And to educate members of the medical community about issues related to physician health and well-being.
2. To protect the public from harm resulting from physician impairment.

Why Is It Necessary?

As a condition for licensure, California hospitals are required to have a medical staff program for the support of physicians disabled as a result of alcohol, drugs or illnesses.

Rather than five separate local groups, it was felt that a community committee *consisting of local physicians (sponsored by the Medical Society and the local hospitals)* could be educated and trained to deal with issues of impairment.

No one knows with certainty the prevalence of impairment among physicians, but various studies and surveys suggest it ranges from 10-20 percent, not significantly different from the general population. Formal treatment programs provide care to only 2 to 3 percent of licensed physicians, suggesting that many, if not most, are not receiving help.

Consumer advocacy groups point out that sports figures have stricter controls imposed upon them than do physicians who deal with human life. It is clear that greater recognition of impairment and easier access to treatment has tremendous potential value for the individual apart from societal needs. The Physician Well-Being Committee is set up to walk the fine line between patient and physician protection.

How Does It Work?

IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT

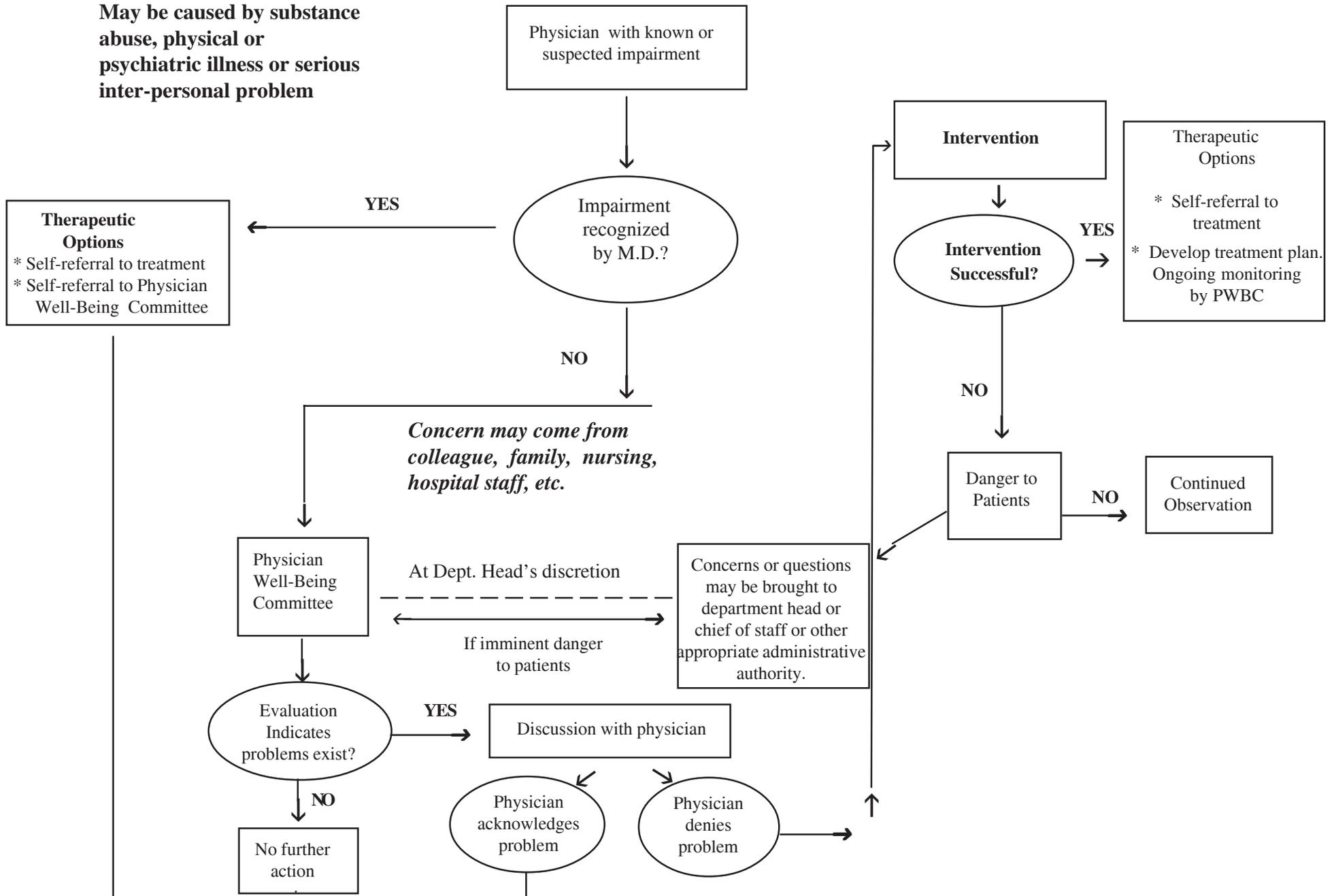
Enlistment of help from the Physician Well-Being Committee begins with a confidential request. This may come either from a physician who feels himself or herself to have a physical, emotional, or addictive problem, or from a member of the medical community or the community-at-large who believes such a problem exists.

At this point a thorough evaluation is made in order to determine whether any reported problems truly exist and, if so, whether they involve deficiencies in patient care. If the complaint is without substance, the matter is simply dropped. When a report is substantiated and patients are **not** at risk, the Physician Well-Being Committee might recommend a treatment program while maintaining absolute confidentiality (*i.e., no written records*) and without reporting to any internal or external disciplinary body. If imminent danger to a patient exists, concerns or questions may be brought to the Department Head or Chief-of-Staff or other appropriate administrative authority.

The flow sheet on the next page shows an example of how this process might work. (each situation would be handled on an individual basis.)

IMPAIRMENT: IDENTIFICATION, INTERVENTION, EDUCATION

May be caused by substance abuse, physical or psychiatric illness or serious inter-personal problem



INTERVENTION

In instances where, after careful examination, a problem is found but a physician refuses to acknowledge its presence, the Physician Well -Being

Committee may initiate “intervention”, which may involve an encounter with the physician to discuss the factors that may be interfering with his/her personal and/or professional life that necessitates treatment.

DANGER SIGNALS THAT SUGGEST IMPAIRMENT

- 1. Relationship Disturbances*
- 2. Abusive Situations*
- 3. Mounting Debts*
- 4. Frequently Missed Appointments*
- 5. Declining Performance*

Discipline and Monitoring

The Physician Well-Being Committee does not prescribe or enforce disciplinary action. This is the responsibility of the individual hospitals, which may decide to continue or suspend staff privileges during treatment. Although the Physician Well-Being Committee may express its concerns to the Executive Committee of the individual's hospital medical staff based on its findings, it does not have the authority to impose its advice, nor will the committee provide treatment for the physician. The Committee is charged with monitoring the terms of any agreement the physician makes regarding maintenance or restoration of privileges. These terms may involve random examination of urine or blood, proctoring, and periodic consultation with the physician's therapist or personal physician. It is central to the role of the Physician Well-Being Committee that it carry out these activities fairly and compassionately.

Education and Health Promotion

Helping physicians recognize and deal with the stresses of modern medical practice is an equally important part of the Physician Well-Being Committee's mission. Through educational programs that identify early signs of potential problems and promote coping skills, the Physician Well-Being Committee hopes to encourage wellness and, whenever possible, prevent the painful and sometimes disastrous consequences that accompany not only addiction but disabling emotional and physical illness as well.

A SELF TEST FOR ALCOHOL ABUSE THE "CAGE" QUESTIONS

- * Have you ever felt you should **C**ut down on your drinking?
- * Have people **A**nnoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- * Have you ever felt bad or **G**uilty about drinking?
- * Have you ever had a drink as an **E**ye-opener in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

**TWO OR MORE POSITIVE ANSWERS
CORRELATE WITH ALCOHOLISM**

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

SELF-HELP GROUPS

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS.....(707) 442-0711
Del Norte: (707) 464-3411

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS.....(707) 444-8645

CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS.....(707) 445-3833

DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT RESOURCES

HUMBOLDT COUNTY ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUG PROGRAMS

Education, intervention, counseling, and referral for drugs and alcohol problems. (707)476-4054

RESIDENTIAL:

ALCOHOL/DRUG CARE SERVICES.....(707)445-3869
Social model detoxification.

CROSSROADS.....(707) 445-0869
Residential drug treatment.

HUMBOLDT RECOVERY CENTER.....Admin:(707) 443-0514
Residential recovery home for drug/alcohol. Women: (707) 443-4237
Men: (707) 444-6262

MOUNTAIN VISTA FARM..... (800) 300-6716
Alcohol & Drug Recovery Center

SINGING TREES.....(707) 247-3495
Alcohol/drug recovery home.

OUTPATIENT:

HUMBOLDT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES ...
24-HOUR CRISIS LINE.....(707) 443-6042
Alcohol counseling for female victims of domestic violence.

HART.....(707) 725-9381
Drinking driver programs.

HEALTHY MOMS PROGRAM.....(707) 441-5220
Alcohol/Drug Day Treatment for pregnant/parenting moms.

MISCELLANEOUS:

HUMBOLDT FAMILY SERVICE CENTER..EUREKA.....(707) 443-7358

Non-profit counseling agency.

OPIATE ABUSE TREATMENT.....(Santa Rosa)..... (707) 576-0818

Methadone maintenance & detox.

OVEREATER'S ANONYMOUS..... (707) 441-9705

OUT OF AREA PROGRAMS:

DUFFY'S MYRTLEDALE, INC..... (707) 942-6888

Calistoga, CA Detoxification and residential recovery home services.

Primarily alcohol. Private pay.

GENESIS RECOVERY CENTER.....(800) 872-0983

Central Point, OR Alcohol/drug program for adults.

HAZELDEN SPRINGBROOK.....(866) 866-4662

Newberg, OR. Inpatient Alcohol/Drug Treatment.

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM.....(415) 296-9900

24-hour referral service. Informational brochure available.

PENINSULA HOSPITAL - (650) 696-5909

ACUTE DETOXIFICATION PROGRAM

Inpatient and outpatient services specializing in chemical dependency and mental health.

ST. HELENA HOSPITAL & CENTER FOR HEALTH.....(800) 454-4673

St. Helena, CA Hospital-based in-patient alcohol and drug services.

Private Pay.

RANCHO L'ABRI.....(619) 468-9333

A residential treatment center in San Diego that emphasizes care of physicians.

Contact the medical director.

PHYSICIANS' CONFIDENTIAL LINE.....No. Cal: (650) 756-7787

So. Cal: (213) 383-2691

Sponsored by the Physician Well-Being Committee of the California Medical Association. Advice given within two hours by specialist in the field. Callers may be anonymous.

PHYSICIAN WELL-BEING COMMITTEE (LOCAL),....(707) 442-2367

**CALL for a list of current committee members*

WHERE TO CALL FOR CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE:

- 1) Personal Physician
- 2) Physician Well-Being Committee
- 3) Community Resources
(listed inside back cover)

**TO CONTACT THE
PHYSICIAN WELL-BEING COMMITTEE**
(707) 442-2367
E-Mail: hdncms@sbcglobal.net
www.hdncms.org

CALL FOR A CURRENT LIST OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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