

Re: “Warning: medical education is hazardous to your mental health. Medical students should make an informed decision to begin and continue training”

Ré : Mise en garde : les études de médecine peuvent mettre la santé mentale des apprenants à rude épreuve. Les étudiants en médecine doivent pouvoir faire le choix d’entamer et de poursuivre leur formation en connaissance de cause

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Response from the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada to “Warning: medical education is hazardous to your mental health. Medical students should make an informed decision to begin and continue training.”¹

The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC), which represents all 17 Canadian medical schools, recognizes that more than half of Canadian physicians and medical trainees are burned out.² Several initiatives have been underway to address this issue. The AFMC Wellness Working Group was established by the AFMC Board in 2018 to develop a compendium of recommendations and key actions for the 17 faculties of medicine to support wellness among physicians, medical learners, graduate students, and faculty members. The AFMC Wellness Committee is continuing the work by identifying existing gaps in resources and services and identifying successful implementation of strategies that support wellness. The committee will share this information with national experts and faculty leaders to facilitate implementation of successful programs.

The culture within our working and learning spaces has been identified as a concern. Thanks to a grant from the Physician Wellness Initiative³ and with support from the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS), AFMC is

addressing the culture of academic medicine in Canada through a three-year initiative which will focus on advancing improvements in all environments where medicine is being practiced and taught. To facilitate this work, an extensive environmental scan has been conducted with broad consultation to identify the dynamics in the current culture with focus on issues and instances that enhance and impede a compassionate, kind, and respectful culture. The consultation confirmed the endemic challenges of the current environment with excessive demands and power imbalance. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic that led to escalating burnout of healthcare providers working in a stressed system where issues of equity diversity, inclusion and racism have become even more glaring.

The need to work on institutional reform and individual behaviours in tandem is clear.

The Culture of Academic Medicine Initiative encourages the institutional adoption of good practices that foster respectful and inclusive environments for the wellness of all. This will be achieved through the creation of resources to enable implementation of the Okanagan Charter : An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges within the Faculties of Medicine. This initiative

also seeks to empower individuals in academic medicine—including in the clinical, research, administrative and training settings—to be kind, respect others and show compassion.

As an association, the AFMC is strongly committed to supporting the faculties of medicine in providing healthy learning and working environments for learners, faculty, and staff. Our aim is to ensure that those who want to become physicians experience the benefits of a rewarding career, and they remain healthy and happy.



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