



POLICY: Impaired Residents

PURPOSE: To provide a guide to prevent or minimize the occurrence of impairment by resident physicians.

Policy:

Impairment of performance by resident physicians places patients at risk. Impairment may result from depression or other mental health/behavioral disorders, physical conditions, medical illnesses, and substance abuse and subsequent chemical dependency. Impairment in resident physicians will be recognized and managed as a medical/behavioral illness.

This concept of impairment allows for diagnosis, opportunity for treatment, and, with a successful recovery, an opportunity to return to training in an appropriate capacity. This policy is written to ensure optimal patient care, excellence in medical education, and to prevent or eliminate, to the extent possible, impaired resident physicians.

The goals of this policy are:

1. To prevent or minimize the occurrence of impairment, including substance abuse, among resident physicians at the UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program and its affiliated medical centers.
2. To protect patients from risks associated with care given by an impaired resident physician.
3. To compassionately confront problems of impairment to effect diagnosis, relief from patient care responsibilities if necessary, treatment as indicated, and appropriate rehabilitation.

In achieving these goals, several principles are involved:

1. The safety of both the impaired individual and of patients is of prime importance.
2. The privacy and dignity of the affected individual will be maintained to the extent possible.
3. To the extent that its resources allow, the UCSF Fresno Wellness Committee will facilitate education, preliminary assessment, diagnostic evaluation, and work with the State Diversion Program.

Procedure:

Diagnosis of Impairment

The following are signs and symptoms of impairment. Isolated instances of any of these signs and symptoms may not impair ability to perform adequately, but if they are noted on a continual basis or if multiple signs are observed, any individual action may be at risk. Warning signs and symptoms of impaired functioning may include:

1. Physical signs such as fatigue, deterioration in personal hygiene and appearance, multiple physical complaints, accidents, eating disorders.
2. Disturbances in personal and professional relationships.
3. Social withdrawal and isolation from peers, inappropriate behavior in the professional setting, unpredictable behavior, increased argumentativeness, and aggressive behavior.
4. Changes in professional behavior patterns such as unexplained absences, tardiness, decreasing quality and interest in work, and inadequate professional performance.
5. Drug use indicators such as excessive agitation or edginess, dilated or pinpoint pupils, noticeable odor of alcohol or cannabis.

Informal Reporting Process

If a resident physician is observed to be impaired/disabled while engaged in the performance of his/her duties, the Program Director or supervisor is to be notified. The Program Director will work with the resident to determine the appropriate actions.

Formal Reporting Process

If a resident is determined to be impaired after the informal reporting process has been completed, the Program Director shall follow the process below:

1. The Program Director will notify the HR Manager who will assemble the Wellness Committee if needed. If further evaluation is thought to be warranted, the resident will be sent for an evaluation by an addiction specialist. The addiction specialist will report to the State Medical Board should that be necessary. The diversion services of the Board will arrange appropriate treatment and monitor resident compliance.
2. The Program Director and the HR Manager will discuss the resident's options regarding any leave of absence and/or suspension from the Medical Education Program in accordance with the UCSF Fresno Due Process Policy. If a leave of absence is indicated, the resident will be informed of the decision to require a LOA as soon as possible.
3. The need for reporting to the State of California Licensing Board will be made with consultation with the Board and University Legal Counsel and the evaluating physician.
4. Should the evaluating physician recommend a level of treatment that can be addressed locally, the HR Manager will assist the resident in obtaining local mental health/treatment services.
5. Should a resident about whom the concern has been expressed be determined not to be impaired, any mention of the concern will be removed from his/her file and the individual will be allowed to return to the Medical Education program without prejudice.
6. Appropriate and complete documentation of the events shall be performed.

Follow-up

The HR Manager will serve as liaison with the Diversion Board. When it is determined by the Board that the resident is ready to re-enter the Medical Education Program, the HR Manager will assist the resident in the re-entry to the Medical Education Program.

Prevention and Education Services

1. Each year during New Housestaff Orientation, an educational component addressing Resident Physician Impairment policies and services will be presented.
2. Seminars addressing the Impaired Physician will be presented at least yearly in the UCSF Fresno Wednesday Special Lecture series. This lecture series is open to all housestaff and faculty.
3. At departmental request, a designated representative will be available to provide educational lectures addressing Impaired Physician issues.

(Original signed Policy is available in the UCSF Fresno Office of Medical Education)

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