

Prevalence of Depression, Anxiety and Substance Abuse and Assessment of Preferred Resources to Enhance Coping in First Year Residents at the University of Toronto

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OVERVIEW

PURPOSE OF STUDY

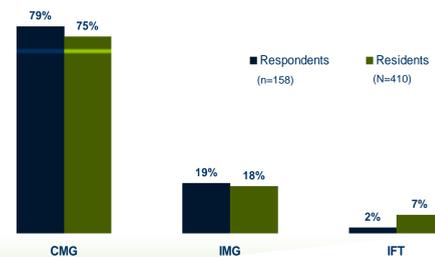
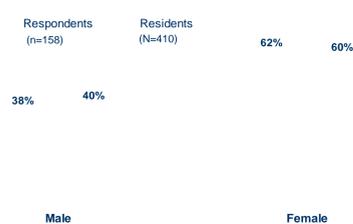
The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of self-reported depression, anxiety and substance abuse among first year residents in postgraduate training programs at the University of Toronto and to assess the awareness of, and willingness to access resources available to these trainees.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was developed that incorporated the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) and 14 standard quantity-frequency questions about current consumption of alcohol and other drugs. Additional questions assessed residents' awareness of available resources to manage mental health concerns, and their willingness to use them. Surveys were distributed at academic seminars. Residents provided written consent to participate and were offered a list of local resources at the time of the survey. Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board. Data was analyzed using the SPSS.

RESPONDENTS

Recruitment took place from March to May of 2008. 158 of a possible 410 first year residents across 12 programs responded, representing 39% of eligible PGY1 residents. As noted in the graphs, the sex and trainee type of respondents reflects the PGY1 resident population.



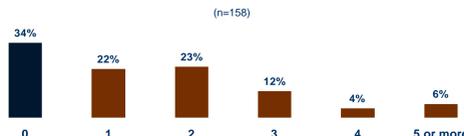
FINDINGS

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

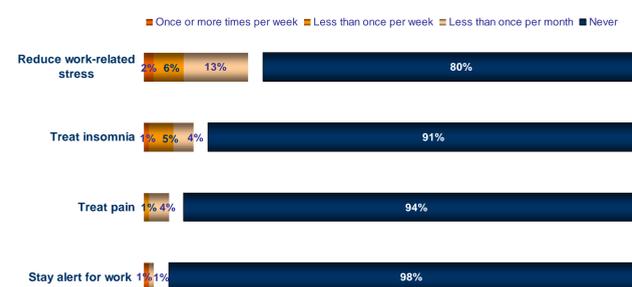
Overall, substance use among first year residents does not appear to be problematic:

- Rates of substance use interfering with work or personal life are low – 3% or less
- No more than 3% reported use of marijuana, opioids, benzodiazepines, excess OTC drugs or stimulants
- The use of alcohol interfered with mood, sleep or energy levels for 11% of residents

How many drinks would you have on a typical drinking day over the past month? (n=158)



Over the past year, how frequently have you used alcohol, marijuana or non-prescribed drugs for the following reasons? (n=158)

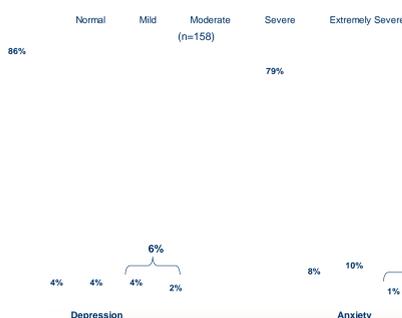


- 8% have concerns about substance use in a fellow resident but only one-third of them would discuss it with the colleague. The most frequent reason for not discussing was the inability to assess the seriousness of the situation

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Majority of residents do not report depression or anxiety symptoms.

Due to these low numbers, the data cannot be segmented by age, sex, or trainee type.



RESOURCES

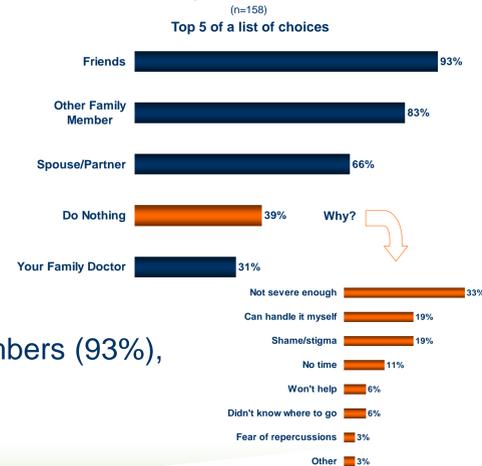
Majority are unaware of specialized programs available to them for mental health concerns:

- Director of Resident Wellness, PGME (55% unaware)
- Physician Health Program, Ontario Medical Assoc. (73% unaware)

Although 80% are aware of the 24-hour PAIRO helpline, only 31% identified it as an important resource.

Resources identified in order of importance: family members (93%), self (89%), and resident colleagues (66%).

Over the last month, if you were experiencing an emotional or mental problem, with whom would you consult? (n=158)



DISCUSSION

Rates of self-reported substance abuse in PGY1 residents at U of T are low and rates of self-reported depression and anxiety are at the low end of the range in the reported literature.

Consistent with the literature, residents turn first to family, friends and fellow residents for help with mental health concerns, rather than available professional services.

Therefore, postgraduate medical education needs to offer curriculum for residents to recognize and respond to their colleagues' mental health and substance abuse problems. More awareness of available resources needs to be offered.

Next Steps: Further identify effect of age, sex, and training type on mental health problems and identify barriers to accessing existing resources such as the Resident Wellness Office.