POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION: 6-MONTH PROFESSIONALISM REPORT

Our postgraduate medical trainees, which includes residents and clinical fellows, are valued colleagues and members of our Temerty Faculty of Medicine community. Although it is our expectation that our clinical and learning environments promote their professional and personal development, we know that our learners are not consistently being treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve. Our 2019 Voice of the Resident and Voice of the Clinical Fellow data revealed that over the prior academic year:

1. 64% of residents and 39% of fellows were exposed to at least one form of incivility (disrespectful behaviour, verbal assault / yelling, bullying, sexism, racism, classism, Islamophobia or Anti-Semitism, sexual harassment, threats of physical harm or physical assault)
2. 54% of residents and 46% of fellows experienced discrimination and / or harassment
3. The primary sources of mistreatment among residents included faculty (47%), patients and their families (49%), nurses (32%), and other PGME learners (17%); among fellows, the primary source was faculty (50%) followed by nurses (33%).
4. We saw higher reported rates of mistreatment among our Black and Indigenous learners and colleagues, other under-represented racialized minorities, women, individuals identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+, minoritized faith groups, and individuals living with a disability.
5. Mistreatment was reported across all clinical programs and hospitals.
6. Despite the high reported rates in our surveys, only a small number of learners submitted formal reports.

These findings echo what has been found in the literature, with learner mistreatment in medicine being reported across jurisdictions, and reported rates holding steady over decades. This suggests that this is a systemic problem that will require collaborative, broad, innovative, and sustainable interventions to create the culture change that we need.

In January 2019, the Optimizing the Learning Environment (OLE) Working Group, co-chaired by Dr. Tony Pignatiello and Dr. Heather Flett, convened a group of learners, staff, and faculty to evaluate how best to address issues in the learning and working environment. The group established learner mistreatment as an initial – though not exclusive – focus of its efforts. Their work culminated in a series of recommendations to the Temerty Faculty of Medicine including creating institutional leadership to address issues in the learning environment, greater clarity in procedures for intake and review of learner concerns, awareness building about expectations of professional values, and increased accountability.

On the basis of these recommendations, Dr. Reena Pattani was appointed as the Temerty Faculty of Medicine’s inaugural Director, Learner Experience, starting May 1, 2020. In this new role, Dr. Pattani champions the development, implementation, and evaluation of approaches to help mitigate the impact of negative events on learners and to reinforce positive cultural norms and professional values. This work will strive for greater alignment between PGME and the MD Program, and it involves partnerships with our learners, Dr. Pier Bryden (Senior Advisor for Clinical Affairs and Professional Values), the Office of Inclusion and Diversity, PGME and MD Program Wellness, as well as the clinical programs and hospitals across the university.
Over the past year, PGME and the Temerty Faculty of Medicine have taken several steps to advance the OLE recommendations and our Academic Strategic Plan 2018-2023:

1. **Awareness-building**
   Several written communications about the importance of professional values; equity, diversity, and inclusion; and wellness as a means to promote a positive workplace culture have been distributed across the Temerty Faculty of Medicine:
   a. Mentors and Allies
   b. Valuing Wellness Across the Faculty
   c. Adaptive, Inclusive, Professional Care
   d. Why We All Belong
   e. Achievement, Wellness and Professionalism
   f. Respecting MD Students: It’s Not a Choice

   Education events for Faculty members and learners on topics related, directly or indirectly, to learner mistreatment:
   g. PGME Session on Hidden Curriculum – Oct 22, 2020
   h. Learner Mistreatment, Chief Residents Orientation – August 11, 2020
   i. Dialogues in Diversity: Explorations of the EDI (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Implications of COVID-19: webinar series
   j. How Do We Talk About Race? - January 21, 2020
   k. Accessibility, Action and Inclusion Panel Event - December 3, 2019
   l. Faculty Development including a new online module reviewing Standards of Professional Behaviour for Medical Clinical Faculty

2. **Institutional Leadership and Clarity**
   We have formed a Learner Experience Advisory Council (LEAC) comprised of learners in PGME and the MD Program, staff, and faculty who will develop strategies to qualitatively and quantitatively understand the experiences of medical students and PGME trainees and use this data to recommend processes, policies, and guiding principles as to how to optimize the learning environment through (1) mitigating the impact of negative events on learners and (2) re-enforcing positive cultural norms and professional values. The LEAC uses anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and inclusive principles in all aspects of its work.

   We are currently in the process of revising our PGME Guidelines for Managing Disclosures of Learner Mistreatment, to ensure greater clarity on procedures for intake and review of learner concerns, aiming for approval and formal adoption of these Guidelines in early 2021. The MD program has already revised its mistreatment protocol, formally adopted in March 2020, and launched new web pages and an online disclosure form in August 2020 to provide a learner-centered mistreatment portal that is easier to navigate. Once the PGME Guidelines are approved, we will move towards an integrated portal that offers resources and support for learners at all levels.
3. **Accountability**

In addition to this 6-month PGME Professionalism Report, the MD Program released a [2019 Professionalism Report](#) on Sept 18, 2020 to provide an update on activities undertaken to date. In order to ensure accountability to our learners, we will build on these reports and commit to distributing an annual professionalism report that will present data regarding the frequency and spectrum of mistreatment behaviours occurring within our environment (subject to thresholds to ensure anonymity is preserved). This annual report will also present the spectrum of resolutions to illustrate some of the ways that the Temerty Faculty of Medicine responds to learner concerns. So far, since May 1, 2020, we have had 13 learner concerns brought forward from PGME and 12 from MD Program learners to the Director of Learner Experience and are making iterative improvements to our standard operating procedures for supporting our learners, escalating reports to the attention of clinical program or hospital leaders, and reporting back. We are also starting to receive consultation requests from program and hospital leaders who are managing mistreatment issues locally, in order to ensure alignment with university procedures.

Table 1: May – Nov 2020 PGME Disclosures/Reports of Mistreatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Alleged Mistreatment</th>
<th>Source of Mistreatment (patient interactions not included)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprofessional behaviour</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination / discriminatory harassment</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual violence / harassment</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HCP = health care provider**

**Other Source of Mistreatment = related to systems level issues**

Through the review and reporting process, some outcomes have included:

- Discussion of supports, resources, and tools available to learners
- Escalation of incidents to program or hospital leadership (including Vice Chairs of Education, Hospital Chiefs, and / or Hospital Vice Presidents of Education, or equivalents) for review and management

Some learners are continuing to weigh their options in relation to mistreatment concerns raised, while others have elected not to pursue a formal report.

Unprofessional behaviour, discrimination, and harassment of learners pose a threat to our learners, our patients, and our institution. We have a collective responsibility to address this. We are committed to working in partnership with all of you to shift culture and improve the working and learning climate for us all. One of our priorities for 2021 is to develop strategies to celebrate citizenship and highlight the positives, casting a spotlight on the many people at our university who strengthen our community every day. By recognizing this excellence, we hope to create positive cultural norms that will become the new standard. Please contact us at any time if you have feedback or advice on how we can do better, or if you want to partner more directly to advance this agenda.