LMS Physician Wellness Commission  
John A. Patterson, MD, MSPH, FAAFP  

Because exemplary patient care depends on exemplary physician self-care

Lexington Medical Society is deeply committed and actively engaged in supporting the personal health and wellbeing of our member physicians. Our Physician Wellness Program and Physician Wellness Commission grew out of the needs of our physician community, which is not exempt from the troubling and tragic national epidemic of physician distress, compassion fatigue, burnout and the loss of joy and meaning in medical practice. The suicides of several local physicians and a UK resident in the last few years are a grim reminder of the need for proactive and creative solutions to reduce the suffering that can lead to such despair and futility.

Our Physician Wellness Program has been operational since January 2016. It provides LMS member physicians with 3 free, completely anonymous visits per year with The Woodland Group, an established and highly regarded local counseling service with extensive experience supporting clients who suffer from distress of all types- including emotional, marital, parenting, job, litigation, substance misuse, professional impairment, career transition and stage of life. Physicians self-refer by calling a dedicated number directly and LMS is billed monthly for the total number of anonymous visits. From its inception, this service has been actively assisting our member physicians and is now being expanded to the University of Kentucky resident physician population- all of whom are LMS members.

After launching the Physician Wellness Program, the LMS Executive Committee established the Physician Wellness Commission as a vehicle for member dialogue, collegial support, idea incubation and planning for future health and well-being initiatives. You and your physician colleagues may benefit from your sharing your own personal story- from initial inspiration to become a physician, through medical training and medical practice.

Consider your responses to the following questions. Then consider sharing those responses with your colleagues through the Physician Wellness Commission.

- “What inspired you to choose medicine as a career?”
- “How do you keep that flame of inspiration alive?”
- “What keeps you awake at night?”
- “If you have ever felt severe stress, compassion fatigue or burnout- how did you recover?”
- “What inspires you most about the patients and families you have served?”

Simply contact LMS CEO Chris Hickey (cmhickey@lexingtondoctors.org) or me (japatt@windstream.net) to be added to our Physician Wellness Commission dialogue, where sharing your story and your voice can make a difference in the quality of life of your colleagues, your staff, your patients, your community- and yourself.

Dr. Patterson chairs the LMS Physician Wellness Commission. He is Associate Professor, UK Department of Family and Community Medicine, is Adjunct Faculty for Saybrook College of Integrative Medicine and Health Sciences (San Francisco) and is senior faculty with the Center for Mind Body Medicine (Washington DC). He is certified by the Physician Coaching Institute and operates the Mind Body Studio (Lexington), offering classes and consultations specializing in stress-related chronic disease and burnout prevention for helping professionals.
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