



The Maryland State Medical Society

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SEPTEMBER 17 IS NATIONAL PHYSICIAN SUICIDE AWARENESS DAY

BALTIMORE, September 15, 2020 – MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, along with the Center For a Healthy Maryland, wants to bring awareness to National Physician Suicide Awareness Day on September 17, which occurs during National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This day is dedicated to honoring the memory of colleagues who have died by suicide and to continue to raise awareness and discussion on how to prevent it. Dr. Loralie Ma, President of The Center For a Healthy Maryland states, “the Center For a Health Maryland has a focus on providing programs to maintain the wellness of practicing physicians serving the public which is why we feel this is such an important day to create awareness around.”

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (<https://www.nami.org/Home>), more than 41,000 individuals die each year by suicide. The Council of Emergency Medicine Residency Directors (<https://www.cordem.org/>) estimates that up to 400 physicians take their own lives per year. While estimates of the actual number of physician suicides vary, the relative risk for suicide is 2.27 times greater among women and 1.41 times higher among men versus the general population. MedChi President, Dr. Michele Manahan, shares “any unnecessary loss of life is truly devastating. As physicians, traumatic loss of colleagues impacts not only us but our patients in tragic ways. We hope to keep moving toward greater protections, particularly related to improvements in professional well-being.”

It is important to recognize the warning signs of suicide, some of which are talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves, talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live, talking about being a burden to others, increasing the use of alcohol or drugs, sleeping too little or too much, withdrawing or isolating themselves, or exhibiting extreme mood swings.

If you or someone you know has been having these thoughts or feelings, it is imperative to seek help. MedChi and the Center for a Healthy Maryland want you to know that the Maryland Physicians Health Program (MPHP) is here to help physicians. MPHP is a private, confidential, nondisciplinary program that works to advocate for the health and well-being of all physicians in the state of Maryland, and to safeguard the public. The Program is HIPAA compliant, and protects the confidentiality of participant records as set forth under state and federal law. The Program is administered by the Maryland State Medical Society’s charitable affiliate, the Center for a Healthy Maryland, and is separate from the Maryland Board of Physicians. The Program assesses and refers participants to clinically appropriate treatment, helps the participant develop a rehabilitation plan, provides case management to facilitate progress with the plan, and provides advocacy on behalf of the client when needed. The program also provides education and outreach to the medical community regarding physician impairment and available services.

Dr. Arthur Hildreth, Director of the Maryland Physicians Health Program, states “during these increasingly difficult times for physicians, it is even more essential to have a place to turn to for professional assistance with potentially career-ending problems. MPHP helps with alcohol/chemical dependency; mental or emotional health; stress; physical and cognitive impairment; disruptive behavior; and sexual misconduct/boundary violation”.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.

About The Center For a Healthy Maryland

The Center's mission is to: advance the practice of medicine, enhance the quality of medical care, promote the health of the citizens of the State of Maryland, explore the history of medicine in Maryland, and preserve MedChi's archives.