

WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: B-15
(A-19)

Subject: Tracking Physician Suicide
Introduced by: Dave Krueger, MD, Delegate
WSMA Board of Trustees
Referred to: Reference Committee B

1 WHEREAS, of all occupations and professions, the medical profession consistently is near the
2 top of occupations with the highest risk of death by suicide; and
3
4 WHEREAS, physicians have a far higher suicide completion rate than the general public (1.4 to
5 2.3 times the rate) and the female physician completion rate equals male physicians and exceeds
6 the general population by 2.5 to 4 times per estimates^{1,2}; and
7
8 WHEREAS, a survey of American surgeons reveals 1 in 16 had experienced suicidal ideation in
9 the last 12 months, but only 26% had sought psychiatric or psychological help, and over 60%
10 felt seeking help could affect their medical license^{3,4,5}; and
11
12 WHEREAS, in one study 9.4% of fourth year medical students and first year residents reported
13 having suicidal ideation in the previous 2 weeks⁶; and
14
15 WHEREAS, after accidents, suicide is the most common cause of death in medical students^{7,8};
16 and
17
18 WHEREAS, the American Medical Association has new policy for medical schools and
19 residencies to gather data on medical student, resident and fellow suicide rates; THEREFORE
20 BE IT
21
22 RESOLVED, that the WSMA explore options for tracking Washington state physician suicides
23 and report its findings back to the House of Delegates in 2020. (Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal Note: None

HOUSE ACTION: ADOPTED _____ ADOPTED AS AMENDED _____
FILED _____ REFERRED _____ NOT ADOPTED _____

References

1. Frank E, Dingle AD. Self-reported depression and suicide attempts among U.S. women physicians. *Am J Psychiatry*. 1999 Dec. 156(12):1887-94. [Medline].
2. Schernhammer ES, Colditz GA. Suicide rates among physicians: a quantitative and gender assessment (meta-analysis). *Am J Psychiatry*. 2004 Dec. 161(12):2295-302. [Medline].
3. Shanafelt TD, Balch CM, Dyrbye L, Bechamps G, Russell T, Satele D, et al. Special report: suicidal ideation among American surgeons. *Arch Surg*. 2001 Jan. 146(1):54-62.
4. Gold, KJ, et al. "I would never want to have a mental health diagnosis on my record": A survey of female physicians on mental health diagnosis, treatment, and reporting". *General Hospital Psychiatry*. Nov-Dec 2016. 43:51-57. [Full Text].
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7. Shaw DL, Wedding D, Zeldow PB. Suicide among medical students and physicians, special problems of medical students. Wedding D, ed. *Behavior and Medicine*. 3rd ed. Hogrefe and Huber: 2001. 78-9 (chap 6).
8. Goldman ML, Shah RN, Bernstein CA. Depression and suicide among physician trainees: recommendations for a national response. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2015 May. 72(5):411-2. [Medline]. [Full Text].