

# CanMEDS Physician Health Guide

A Practical Handbook for Physician Health and Well-being

Editors: Derek Puddester ◊ Leslie Flynn ◊ Jordan Cohen



**ROYAL COLLEGE**  
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA

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A Practical Handbook for Physician Health and Well-being

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A Practical Handbook for Physician Health and Well-being

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Dedicated to Michael F. Myers, MD FRCPC  
Canada's physician health pioneer

## Foreword: Time for a practical handbook for physician health and well-being

Jason R. Frank, MD MA(Ed) FRCPC; Jon Cormier, MA; Cynthia Abbott, MPI; and Sarah Taber, MHA/MGSS

“Physician health” is an emerging field in medicine, and this book marks another milestone in its development. As described by Puddester in the Introduction, physician health used to be a euphemism for a clinician with a substance abuse problem. We have come a long, long way from those days. Today, the field has expanded in scope and depth. We live in an era in which there is a world shortage of health professionals, and no prospect for relief in our practice lifetime. More than ever, we need every available health professional to possess the healthy lives that they work to promote in their patients. In an era of increasing intensity, accountability, upheaval, and scarcity in health care, we need to support sustainable practices for those in the health professions too. Numerous pioneering leaders have developed physician health, not only as an area of practice, but also a field of scholarship, and moreover, an imperative. In this book, Puddester, Flynn, and Cohen et al, answer this call. Leading practitioners and scholars have assembled their insights into a publication with a unique niche: an accessible, useful, ready resource for those thinking or teaching about physician health and well-being. From addictions to zeitgebers, from career planning to financial planning, *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is a handy source for information.

*The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is the latest resource from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada’s national faculty development program. This program supports the teaching and assessment of the CanMEDS Roles in medicine by creating resources and Train-the-trainer Workshops to support each of the seven identified domains of physician competence. *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* relates specifically to the Professional Role, a domain that includes the ability of physicians to demonstrate a commitment to physician health and sustainable practice.

As Professionals, physicians are committed to the health and well-being of individuals and society through ethical practice, profession-led regulation, and high personal standards of behaviour. However, by dedicating so much of themselves to the health and caring of others, physicians can lose sight of their own health needs. *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* was created with the idea that having healthy physicians is a necessary ingredient for excellence in health care.

*The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is an introduction to the broad scope of issues that make up physician health. As a toolkit, this publication is an easy-to-access resource which all physicians can use to pursue better physician health. Using real-world situations and scenarios, this guide will help physicians discover practical and useful strategies for introducing and promoting physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

The topics covered throughout *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* were identified by a panel of experts—physicians who work with other physicians who have health concerns. Content experts were challenged to present their topic in a simple two-page spread that introduces readers to the topic, provides a sample case, and additional references for further reading. As a result, readers can quickly access information on any topic area and find a succinct summary of information along with the tools for further exploration.

### What is the purpose of *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide*?

As the nature of contemporary health care evolves and develops, so does the role of physician. The term “physician health” has become one of the cornerstone ideas to improving the delivery of health care, with the thesis that healthy medical practitioners are a necessary ingredient in offering a higher quality of care. Medicine can be a very rewarding career but it is also a very demanding profession. As this guide shows the hazards to physician health are wide ranging – from poor nutrition to problems with finances to stress management – these are the issues that can and do affect all physicians at some stage in their careers.

Throughout the handbook, each chapter acts as an introduction to a subject and provides practical information for understanding the issue. The chapters are created to be accessible within the busy schedule many physicians maintain. This handbook not only creates awareness to the wide-ranging factors involved in maintaining a sustainable practice but presents easy-to-follow solutions to many of the issues surrounding physician health.

### Who created the handbook?

*The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* has been created by practicing physicians from across Canada and international locations who are subject matter experts in the areas each has written on.

### How is the information presented?

At its core this is a practical guide for dealing with the issues that make up physician health. *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is thematically organized into 11 Sections that cover the main areas of physician health, including a section that presents many of the practical resources currently available to assist physicians and their own health needs. Each section is divided into chapters which present the specific elements that make up the larger themes. The chapters are presented in a two-page layout complete with specific learning objectives, a practical case and case resolution, the core information on the subject, key resources and reflective exercises.

## CanMEDS Professional Role

### Definition

As Professionals, physicians are committed to the health and well-being of individuals and society through ethical practice, profession-led regulation, and high personal standards of behaviour.

### Key Competencies

*Physicians are able to...*

1. Demonstrate a commitment to their patients, profession, and society through ethical practice;
2. Demonstrate a commitment to their patients, profession, and society through participation in profession-led regulation;
3. Demonstrate a commitment to physician health and sustainable practice.

The goal of this publication is to have a resource that not only describes what makes up physician health, but to have an easy to access handbook for dealing with physician health issues directly. There is a quick reference index at the end of the book made up of key terms and issues for dealing with physician health needs and each section is colour coded, so finding specific information is quick and simple.

### Who is this handbook for?

The Royal College is committed to creating resources for medical education, physician competence and quality care. *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* has been designed for multiple stakeholders, including:

#### Medical educators

Medical educators will find a resource on the principles of physician health. *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* introduces the myriad of topics that make up physician health, well-being, and sustainability. When creating curriculum or trying to answer questions that come up during a teaching session, *The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is there to introduce a subject, provide key information on the topic, present a case and case resolution, and to provide key resources and further reading on the topic. This guide expands upon the Professional Role from the CanMEDS Framework and can be used to highlight the complexities of physician health and sustainable practice.

#### Teachers

*The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is also a resource for front-line clinical teachers. The easy to access format is intended to facilitate bedside teaching. The cases are derived from evidence of patients' needs, from practicing physicians' perspectives, from content experts and from empirical research. This guide helps teachers ask effective educational questions that explore the variety of aspects that make up physician health and lead to sustainable practice.

### Trainees and students

*The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is aimed to directly address the learning needs of medical students and residents. Although the guide provides information for physicians throughout their careers the information is presented to show students and residents many of the everyday issues that can (and do) affect physician health. Along with presenting learning moments, this publication provides practical advice for those in training to help manage their own health in the form of available resources, practical advice, and key references for each topic.

### Practicing physicians

*The CanMEDS Physician Health Guide* is a simple resource for physicians treating other physicians. This guide presents the "bigger picture" for all the phases of a physician's lifecycle and the issues surrounding physician health. The basis for all CanMEDS products is that they are created by physicians for physicians. The information and cases are based on scenarios that practicing physicians will recognize. Similarly the resources identified throughout the handbook make this guide a powerful tool for maintaining one's own health.

The authors and editors have done an outstanding job in bringing this together. We trust you find it useful.

### Key reference

Frank JR, ed. 2005. Professional. In *The CanMEDS 2005 Physician Competency Framework*. Ottawa: The Royal College, 23–4. Last retrieved August 19, 2009: [rcpsc.medical.org/canmeds/CanMEDS2005/CanMEDS2005\\_e.pdf](http://rcpsc.medical.org/canmeds/CanMEDS2005/CanMEDS2005_e.pdf).

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### Derek Puddester, MD MEd FRCPC

Dr. Puddester completed his undergraduate training in English/Russian Studies and Medicine at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He completed a Psychiatry Residency at McMaster University and a Fellowship in Child Psychiatry at uOttawa. He is the Medical Leader of the Behavioural Neurosciences and Consultation-Liaison Team at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Dr. Puddester is also the Director of Continuing Medical Education and Professional Development for the Department of Psychiatry at CHEO. Dr. Puddester is an Associate Professor at uOttawa's Faculty of Medicine where he also serves as the Director of the Faculty Wellness Program. Dr. Puddester's educational and research work focuses on physician health, healthy work environments, e-learning, and curriculum theory and development. The Canadian Association of Interns and Residents has recognized his leadership in physician health by creating the *Dr. Derek Puddester Resident Well-Being Award* which is given annually to a person or program that has made a significant contribution to the improvement of resident health and wellness. He is a proud Newfoundlander, parent, partner and son. Ask him about geocaching, the value of play, and power of actualized ideas.



### Leslie Flynn, MD MMus CCFP FRCPC

After receiving her undergraduate degree in Music from Queen's University and a Master's in Music from the University of Toronto in 1982, Dr. Flynn returned to Queen's where she received her MD in 1987 and undertook her postgraduate medical education training. She became certified as a Family Physician in 1988 and subsequently as a psychiatrist in 1995. She then began her professional career at Queen's University when she was cross-appointed to the Departments of Family Medicine and Psychiatry in the role of Family Medicine Liaison Psychiatrist. She has held roles as Director of the Continuing Medical Education program, Postgraduate Program Director and the Director of Psychotherapy in the Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Flynn is currently an Associate Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Family Medicine and the Associate Dean of Postgraduate Medical Education at Queen's University.

Dr. Flynn has received departmental awards for *Excellent Leadership in Education and Dedication to the Ideals of the Department* as well as the *Annual Staff Excellence in Teaching Award*. She has conducted research in physician health, the Role of Health Advocate, interprofessional education and the scholarship of teaching and learning.



### Jordan Cohen, MD FRCPC

Dr. Cohen is currently an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary, where he completed both his residency and undergraduate medical training. He is also the Director of Student Affairs of Undergraduate Medical Education and Chair of *The Physicianship Course* for the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary. His educational and research work focuses on balancing medicine, physician health and professionalism.

Dr. Cohen is a child and adolescent psychiatrist appointed as Medical Director of NW Family and Adolescent/Child Services, Consultant Psychiatrist at the Young Adult Program (Foothills Hospital), and Consulting Psychiatrist at the Arnika Centre for individuals with developmental disabilities. He is also a board member of the Physician Health Monitoring Program for the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Dr. Cohen has received multiple awards including: the *Canadian Medical Association's CMA Award for Young Leaders (Early Career Physician)* 2009; the Canadian Association of Interns and Residents, *Dr. Derek Puddester Resident Well Being Award* 2006 for his contributions to resident health; the *Department of Psychiatry's Postgraduate Clinical Education Award* 2008 in recognition of outstanding contribution in the area of postgraduate clinical education; and the *Department of Psychiatry's Postgraduate Research Award for Part-time Faculty* 2008 in recognition of outstanding research contributions in Psychiatry.



## A. Goals and objectives of this guide

The vast majority of today's physicians entered their profession after considerable reflection, years of academic preparation, and in the face of significant competition and challenge. The intellectual, emotional, physical and social demands of medical training are rigorous, as are the professional and personal demands of practice. The good news is that most physicians thrive in their work environments, are strong and healthy, practise excellent strategies to safeguard their own well-being, and enjoy long and healthy lives. When physicians' personal well-being and professional commitment are in balance, positive synergies result that sustain them in their healing role, to the benefit of patients and the health care system as a whole.

And yet the phrase physician health seems not to convey that common reality. For many decades it was a euphemistic reference to struggles with addiction. Slowly, provincial medical associations and colleges began to develop innovative programs that provided treatment and support services primarily for issues related to substance abuse. However, physician health programs have evolved dramatically in recent years in response to demand for a range of services to address issues ranging from depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation to disruptive behaviour, risk of relapse and family discord. The growth of these programs has been consistent across Canada, and physician organizations continue to support a deeper understanding of “physician health.”

In collaboration with other stakeholders and partners across the country, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is now taking a leadership role in the field of physician health. The CanMEDS project has modernized Canadian specialty medicine and is being adopted in many countries in response to the increasing complexity of contemporary health care delivery. Although, as is the case with many physician competencies, aspects of physician health can readily fit into many CanMEDS roles, the College has anchored it within the Professional Role. Specifically, as professionals, physicians are committed to the health and well-being of individuals and society through ethical practice, profession-led regulation, and high personal standards of behaviour.” The key competencies of this role demand that physicians:

- *Demonstrate a commitment to their patients, profession and society through ethical practice;*
- *Demonstrate a commitment to their patients, profession, and society through participation in profession-led regulation; and*
- *Demonstrate a commitment to physician health and sustainable practice.*

This handbook is designed to help educators and learners better understand the broad meaning of “physician health,” to discover practical strategies to promote professional health and to apply such knowledge to real-world situations. It is not meant to be an academic exercise, but rather to form part of a practical toolkit of resources that Canadian physicians can access and apply as they see fit. Readers can use this handbook to explore their own questions and needs, educators can draw upon it as a resource for teaching and learning programs, and investigators may find it helpful in identifying avenues for research in physician health.

Topic areas were identified by a panel of experts who work in the trenches with physicians presenting with health concerns. Content experts were invited to cover these topics—including sample cases, strategies and solutions, references, and reflective exercises—in a succinct format that would allow readers to access information quickly while encouraging further exploration.

It has been an honour to work on this project on behalf of the Royal College, and I am grateful to my coeditors, the brilliant and enthusiastic volunteer contributors, the project team, and the many colleagues and learners who provided feedback and guidance along the way. Our profession truly is wonderful, and it shines the brightest when we collaborate to create powerful and meaningful change.

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### **Key reference**

Frank JR, ed. 2005. Professional. In *The CanMEDS 2005 Physician Competency Framework*. Ottawa: The Royal College, 23–4.