



Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns

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Dear faculties of pharmacy across Canada,

The Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI) believes that health and wellness are two vital components to the success of pharmacy students during their education and throughout their career. According to the Mental Wellness Survey conducted by CAPSI in 2018, over 85% of students in all ten Canadian Faculties of Pharmacy feel overwhelmed during their education. Almost half (44%) of survey participants believe there is space for improvement in the support that student bodies and faculty members can provide.

As future healthcare professionals, it is essential for students to be able to take care of their wellness. According to a survey conducted by the Association of University and College Counseling Centre Directors, half of the pharmacy student survey participants exhibit a high range of psychological stress (1). A cohort study by Henning et al. discovered 30% of the pharmacy student participants reached the clinical diagnostic criteria for imposter syndrome (2). Imposter syndrome is correlated to higher rates of depression or anxiety. Additionally, the attributes of imposter syndrome mimic closely to those of burnout, particularly, feelings of exhaustion, depersonalization and cynicism (2). The high prevalence of these conditions can have a lasting impact on student success and work-life balance. A case study found that on average a working week for students consists of 59-71 hours, split between responsibilities of studying, working, commuting and domestic time (3). According to students, overarching themes of stigma, campus culture, availability of mental health services on campus, campus accommodations of mental health needs and presence of coping strategies contribute to mental wellness the most (4).

Healthcare professionals and public service personnel operate in workplaces that involve a great amount of responsibility, trust, and accountability to meet the needs of the population. It is only natural for this amount of responsibility to sometimes lead to pervasive mental health struggles.

Even though we are health care providers who understand the stigma around mental health, the stigma is still prevalent in student life. If future professionals are to provide the best care for their patients, they should be taught the necessary coping skills to take care of themselves. Health care professionals are not immune to depression, anxiety or suicidal ideation; in fact, our high stress jobs may cause us to be more susceptible to them. Students should not be afraid to seek mental health and wellness services, and they should especially not have difficulty finding them. Mental wellness is essential for pharmacists in order to have a sound foundation to support their own clinical practice. The future of pharmacy needs to be empowered and equipped to support both our personal wellbeing and that of our patients.



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a CAPSI invites all ten Faculties of Pharmacy across Canada to open discussion with CAPSI National leaders, the Ad-hoc Student Wellness Committee and leaders within the faculty student associations to work towards teaching and promoting increasing wellness and resilience in pharmacy education.

Collectively, we must work to ameliorate the wellbeing of pharmacy students and destigmatize the topic of mental health by (5):

- Incorporating wellness and resilience topics into the curriculum, including self-awareness and self-care (1,5).
 - E.g. integrate a class on mental health first aid
- Developing resources and integrating wellness and resilience into professional development programming (1,5).
 - E.g. promote the resources available on the local campus, organize activities such as yoga or therapy dogs to promote student wellness specific within the faculty
- Increasing accessible support services on campus for pharmacy students (1,5).
 - E.g. Increase access to psychologists and academic advisors
 - E.g. Provide dedicated time, counselling services, and advisors to health care professional students.

A study of pharmacy students at Midwest University acknowledged the gaps in literature to streamline wellness needs of pharmacy students and developed a process to assess needs and implement wellness interventions for students. This process for assessment was designed to be transferable to other schools to generate research specific to the needs of each school's students to create change at the grassroots level. A survey of 7 different health professional colleges depicted 40% of students as overweight or obese, 73% sleeping less than 7 hours per night, 66% not reaching 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise per week and 77% not meeting the daily recommended servings of fruits and vegetables (5). As pharmacy professionals, we are aware of the clinical significance of these percentages. Faculties must work alongside Canadian pharmacy students to acquire feedback regarding better programming to create a positive environment to encourage the wellness of our students and practicing professionals that we aim to achieve for our patients.

To conclude, we want to highlight some initiatives that are done in certain faculties such as the class taught at Université de Montréal on suicide prevention or RxPRN, an online peer support network, for University of Waterloo pharmacy students. This year, CAPSI will be hosting a social media campaign to promote student wellness as well as share stories of pharmacy students across Canada. We invite all faculties to join the promotion and develop their own initiatives to promote student wellness.




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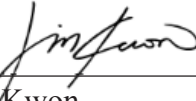
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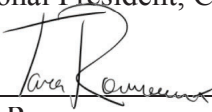
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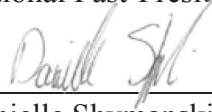
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In collaboration with the CAPSI National Advocacy and Professional Affairs Committee and the Ad-Hoc Student Wellness Committee.

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