CLINICAL DIRECTOR MESSAGE, 
DR. TERRIE BRANDON

*The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.*

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

As we welcome the transition between those most wonderful and fleeting of seasons, spring and summer in Alberta, we at PFSP are also welcoming several transitions in our program.

Dr. Vincent Hanlon, our Education Consultant for the past five years, has decided to step away from this role in order to facilitate his own gradual transition into retirement. Fortunately for us, he will continue on in his work with us as an Assessment Physician, and will also continue to do educational presentations when they fit in between his travels. We are very grateful for Dr. Hanlon’s vision, hard work and commitment to education in physician health. We wish him much happiness in his more leisurely life.

We are extremely pleased to welcome our new Education Consultant, Dr. Sara Taylor, who took on the position in April. Dr. Taylor is a family physician living in Red Deer. She is passionate about physician health issues and brings fresh ideas and a new perspective to our team. She also brings a comfort and facility with new technology and social media which will provide new avenues for us in increasing awareness of the importance of physician health.

In February of this year Dr. Martin Reedyk, an Assessment Physician for the past seven years, stepped away from this role; also in the pursuit of semi-retirement. We are thankful for the many years in which he supported those who called our line, and for the compassion and wisdom he shared with all of us.

We have welcomed two new voices to our assistance line. Dr. Lois Silvester has joined our team as an Assessment Physician, and Dr. Sara Taylor will be taking on this role in addition to her work as Education Consultant. Both are welcome additions to our team.

Our Case Coordination Team has also grown this year, as some of our assessment physicians have assumed the role of coordinating care for physicians with more complex health problems. Welcome and thanks to Dr. Marc Cherniwichan, Dr. Lil Miedzinski and Dr. Maureen Pennington for taking on this challenging and rewarding work.

Despite all these changes, our commitment to physician health remains constant. Our 24/7 assistance line is always there for Alberta physicians and their families, our case coordination service continues to support those physicians with the more complex needs, and our education team continues to spread the message about the importance of physician health as we move along the path to a more compassionate culture of medicine.
Dr. Vincent Hanlon, PFSP Assessment Physician

A warm welcome to Dr. Sara Taylor, who recently joined our PFSP team and has a passion for physician wellness and, for a number of years, has written a health blog—http://www.saratmd.com/. She and PFSP education coordinator, Diane Bird, are the core members of the PFSP education team. I will continue to work as an assessment physician on the help-line, and do some presentations and writing about physician health.

For the past several years our education and health promotion mandate at PFSP has been to infuse some physician health content into a variety of conferences, to do presentations requested by different training programs at resident education half-days, and generally spread the word to encourage, legitimize and facilitate conversations about physician health among students, residents and physicians. An increasingly robust physician health literature provides evidence for something that has always made intuitive sense—that healthy physicians provide better care to their patients.

Over the years we’ve focused our education efforts on a number of important physician health topics—dealing with stress, sleep and fatigue management, career transitions, substance misuse, living with adverse events, disruptive physicians and healthy workplaces, and stigma and mental health.

Going forward, we will continue to facilitate necessary conversations about the complicated business of “stress management” and what we refer to as work-life balance, or harmony, or resilience. There is no panacea, no simple solution to this conundrum of how best to achieve professional success alongside a satisfying and complete personal life.

Aware that 40% of the physician workforce in Canada is presently over the age of 55 (https://www.cma.ca/En/Pages/basic-physician-facts.aspx), PFSP sees late-career issues of aging physicians and their fitness to practice growing in importance in the future as both health and human resource issues.

I recently attended the second annual eHITS in Vancouver—http://ehealth.med.ubc.ca/2014/10/23/ehits-2015/. This one day conference is the brainchild of Dr. Kendall Ho, emergency physician and director of the eHealth Strategy Office at UBC. The conference explores the expanding and innovative roles of information technologies in health care delivery. Such a technology showcase indirectly raises the question of how the tools of digital connectivity (e.g. smart phone apps, social media, blogs, webcasts, data bases of physician health literature, wearable monitoring devices, and our own modest PFSP/AMA website) can be used to improve and maintain a physician’s health.
One more unanswered question for me—at the opposite end of the digital spectrum—regards the emerging place of mindfulness within medical training and practice environments. The benefits of the mind/body awareness practice of mindfulness continue to be demonstrated in an increasingly wide variety of therapeutic milieus. I watch with interest where and how this 2600 year old “tool” will be further implemented into our communities of practice.

Read any good books lately?

Dr. Atul Gawande’s new book, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* will be a valuable read for many physicians, but especially for the cohort of late-career doctors who are interested in deciphering the writing on the wall regarding their own end-of-life health challenges. Gawande uses his physician-father’s illness and death as a stepping stone to examine the evolution and inadequacy of elder care in America, and to propose some salutary alternatives:

> The battle of being mortal is the battle to maintain the integrity of one’s life—to avoid becoming so diminished or dissipated or subjugated that who you are becomes disconnected from who you were or who you want to be. Sickness and old age make the struggle hard enough. The professionals and institutions we turn to should not make it worse. (page 141)

How about a website?

https://goamra.org/

Since 2010 the American Mindfulness Research Association has been providing regular updates (to your inbox, if you choose) on current research about mindfulness in its *Mindfulness Research Monthly*. The July 2015 issue includes recent articles published in a variety of periodicals including *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, *Medical Education Online*, *PLoS ONE*, *Military Medicine*, and *Mindfulness*.

How about three bicycle rides you won’t forget?
The Highwood Pass in Kananaskis Country
It’s the highest paved road in Canada at 2206 metres. Plan to cycle the pass in the first two weeks of June after most of the snow has melted but before the pass re-opens to vehicular traffic mid-month. I did this ride with a group of friends up and back from the east gate on the Longview side. Half-way to the top we cycled mindfully past a grizzly bear munching salad on the grassy slope, 25 meters off the roadside.

Red Rock Canyon, 35 km round trip from the Waterton town site
Cycle off the grasslands up through an alpine meadow exploding with wildflowers in mid-June. Continue along the road that rolls upwards through the Blakiston Creek Valley. You climb about 500 metres before arriving at the parking lot close by Red Rock Creek. On your return stop in for afternoon tea at the Prince of Wales Hotel with its spectacular view down the Waterton Lake.

Logan Pass, Going to the Sun Road, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park
Start with breakfast at 08:00 at the Park Cafe not far from the east park gate. Rolling cycle for 18 km along St. Mary Lake before the 12 km climb begins in earnest to the interpretive centre at the top of the pass (2,026 metres, on the Continental Divide). Views are even more incredible down the steeper western side. Check your brakes before descending

Dr. Sara Taylor, PFSP Education Consultant

“The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.” ~ Gautama Buddha

I am so pleased to be embarking on my new roles with the Physician & Family Support Program (PFSP) as both an Assessment Physician and the Education Consultant. I appreciate both the assistance and guidance Dr. Vincent Hanlon has given me as I transition into his current role as the Educational Consultant. The PSFP is a welcoming, supportive team that I am honoured to be a part of.
I currently live in Red Deer, AB, with my husband (a Radiologist) and my two teenage children. I was born and raised in Saint John, NB where I completed my Bachelor of Science degree. I then attended the University of Western Ontario in London, ON for my Medical Degree. In 2000, I completed my Family Medicine residency at the University of Calgary. Since then, I have practiced in various clinical and non-clinical settings in both Alberta for 9 years and in Prince Edward Island for 5 years in between.

My interest in physician health and wellness has blossomed in the last few years. I started my own website and blog just over 2 1/2 years ago as a way to channel my interests in education, prevention, writing, personal development and wellness. Along the way, I started to engage with other physicians and medical organizations through social media, ultimately increasing my awareness about issues specific to physicians, medical trainees and their families. In particular, was quickly drawn to and started to focus my attention on physician burnout.

As a physician who is also married to a physician, I truly believe in the power of building communities within medicine as a way to enhance physician well-being. This sense of community allows for increased awareness, greater acceptance and potential change as it relates to issues pertinent to physicians. Ultimately, through information sharing and working together, we can help each other on our journey toward living meaningful lives both at home and at work.

**On my to-read bookshelf:**


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Planning your next Physician Health Education Event?

Visit PFSP’s website or contact us by email for an education presentation request form:

pfsp@albertadoctors.org
LOOK FOR US IN THE WINTER OF 2016 AT…

Banff, Emergency Medicine for Rural Physicians Conference

Banff: Alberta Medical Students Conference and Retreat

Kananaskis: Cabin Fever

Banff: Alberta General Surgeons meeting

Banff: Alberta College of Family Physicians and Annual Scientific Assembly

Banff: Alberta Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting

CALLING PHYSICIANS FOR PHYSICIANS

PFSP believes in the importance of colleagues caring for colleagues and physicians caring for physicians. Physicians deserve confidential health care. Every physician should have his or her own physician and experience the gift of being a patient. This is important for the health and sustainability of our profession and contributes to improved patient care in our communities.

PFSP maintains a confidential list of physicians for physicians. If you have received this newsletter, no doubt you are on this list and endorse PSFP’s goals.

Do you know of other family physicians that may have a future as a physician for physicians?

Do you belong to a primary care network that would be interested in developing physicians for physicians as an area of expertise?

As a psychiatrist or addiction medicine physician, do you know of colleagues who would be interested and valuable members of the clinical network? If yes please contact:

pfsp@albertadoctors.org.

PFSP is prepared to discuss ideas and options. We offer education for physicians joining our clinical network and support as required.

HOW DO I ACCESS THE SERVICE?

For confidential support services, call 1.877.767.4637 toll-free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

PFSP Administration office:
pfsp@albertadoctors.org
Phone: 403-228.2880, Fax: 403.245.2899

VISIT PFSP’S WEBSITE
www.albertadoctors.org