

A Healthcare Practitioner whose life and work are affected by alcohol or drugs is a risk to patients, colleagues and themselves

Early identification and treatment can facilitate return to better health and to effective work

Are you suffering from substance abuse or dependence (addiction)?

The term substance is used to cover alcohol, illicit drugs and prescription medications taken inappropriately, the use of which leads to impairment in physical and psychological health and social dysfunction

If you answer yes to 3 or more of the following criteria, then you may be affected by **Dependence Syndrome**:

1. Do you have a strong desire or sense of compulsion to take the substance?
2. Do you have impaired capacity to control the substance use in terms of onset, termination or levels of use?
3. Do you experience a physiological withdrawal state when the substance is reduced or stopped, and relief when consumption is resumed?
4. Is there evidence of increased tolerance i.e. increased use for the same effect?
5. Are you preoccupied with use of the substance i.e. alternative interests or activities are substituted in spending time obtaining the substance?
6. Do you persist in the use of the substance despite evidence of harmful consequences?

The purpose of these questions is to confront the strong denial that is very commonly present and so motivate you to seek treatment.

Know your risks!

Anaesthetists are at high risk for developing alcohol or drug abuse problems for the following reasons:

- Stressful work environment
- Easy access to a wide range of potent psychoactive drugs
- Financial and relationship struggles
- Psychological conditions e.g. Type A personality, anxiety, depression
- Family history of mental illness or substance abuse

First steps to Healing and Recovery!

Substance abuse and dependence is a medical illness for which help is available.

You do not have to suffer alone!

It is not your fault, but it is your responsibility to address it before it gets completely out of control.

Early intervention will lead to early assessment and treatment, thus avoiding harm to patients and further harm to yourself.

This should not be seen as a punitive act but as the first step towards treatment and recovery. Confidentiality will be maintained.

You are urged to contact one of the following:

- WAG members: ...
- Psychiatrists/Psychologists: ...
- Rehabilitation centres: ...

Treatment

Treatment is effective and will lead to a significant improvement in physical, psychological and social well-being for those who are willing to engage in a treatment programme.

Treatment is a multidisciplinary process involving highly qualified experts, and is directed to your individual needs depending on the type and severity of the substance abuse and the nature of associated problems.

The goal of a substance dependent anaesthetist is abstinence with the resumption of a normal pattern of personal and professional life.