

## **Cultivating a healthier future for doctors: family physicians supporting sick colleagues.**

This resource is a companion document for a **Symposium** presented at WONCA Europe 2024, Dublin- presented by Prof Maria Pilar Astier Pena (University of Zaragoza), Assistant Clinical Prof Andrée Rochfort (Irish College General Practice) and Dr Margaret Kay (The University of Queensland).

It is designed to support doctors who are caring for doctors.

Astier Pena MP, Kay M, Rochfort A. Cultivating a healthier future for doctors: family physicians supporting sick colleagues. (Symposium) WONCA Europe 2024 Conference. “*Changing the Nature of Family Medicine. Cultivating the Future.*” 25-28 September 2024: Dublin.

## **Teaching videos for Doctors caring for Sick Doctors**

This series of four teaching videos are in Spanish but it is possible to change the captions (subtitles) in the Youtube clips to English.

### **Episode 1:**

"Médico de médicos: la especialidad clandestina" - "Doctor of Doctors: The Clandestine Specialty"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGhy4prqWVM&list=PLL8clENyCwRM44nMWPI2KkHRgUaeNydMr>

### **Episode 2:**

"La estudiante de medicina: desorden de prioridades" - "The Medical Student: A Disorder of Priorities"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuHEPIKT7J4&list=PLL8clENyCwRM44nMWPI2KkHRgUaeNydMr>

### **Episode 3:**

"El médico residente: ser vulnerable no es una opción" – "The resident doctor: Being vulnerable is not an option"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X47K3b0R9A4&list=PLL8clENyCwRM44nMWPI2KkHRgUaeNydMr>

### **Episode 4:**

"El médico, jubilado, sigue siendo médico" - "The retired doctor is still a doctor"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT9vKe1No5w&list=PLL8clENyCwRM44nMWPI2KkHRgUaeNydMr&t=1s>

## **'A Healthy Medical Profession - Caring for Ourselves and Our Colleagues'**

This is a 2 hour Training Module developed to support doctors to learn more about doctors' health. This includes a series of modules that discuss:

- Understanding Self-Care
- Accessing health care
- Learning to be a Doctor-Patient
- Training to be a Doctor for a Doctor

The module is available at: <https://training.drs4drs.com.au/login/index.php>

The interactive module is designed for busy doctors and it is possible to stop and start the module in your own time. If you register with your name then at the end of the module there is a certificate that will be provided to state that the module has been completed. You can join anonymously if you wish though it is necessary to provide an email address to log in. It is up to the user to determine what state they wish to nominate within the module.

### **Reflecting on how we care for the doctor-patient with compassion and expertise.**

All doctors, no matter what their specialty, are likely to be called upon to care for a doctor as a patient. This is especially true for family physicians / general practitioners (GPs) because all doctors should have their own GP.

Being a GP for a doctor requires a breadth of understanding of doctors' health. The health issues that doctors experience extend to the full range of physical and mental health issues that any person may experience.

Many doctor-patients experience barriers accessing care. Often doctors have been dislocated from their previous healthcare provider because their work has led them to settle in a different place. Sometimes this means that the doctor-patient may present later than other patients. Sometimes doctors have self-treated prior to their presentation. Understanding these barriers and the difficulties that doctors may encounter before arriving for formal care can help the establishment of this new therapeutic relationship.

Doctor-patients need to be reassured that their confidentiality will be maintained. Doctor-patients may be worried about how their health issue will impact their capacity to practice. Acknowledging such concerns and enabling an open conversation can assist in ensuring these issues are addressed.

The treating GP needs to ensure they practice their usual medicine taking a full history, ensuring they examine the patient and explain the intended investigations to ensure that the doctor-patient understands (rather than assuming they understand). The history needs to include understanding the work that the doctor does, what the doctor does in their time off to relax, and who is in their family. The history also needs to include the more sensitive issues of substance use and mental health issues that are generally asked in a routine consultation. This approach is usual practice, but it is easy to slip into the habit of a collegial conversation rather than a consultation. Bring the focus of the discussion back to the purpose of the consultation requires self-awareness.

The treating GP needs to support the doctor-patient to continue to strengthen this relationship by ensuring a follow-up plan is in place. Like all patients, doctor-patients have a right to engage with the shared decision-making process, however it is vital that the treating GP ensures robust boundaries are in place. It is normal for a doctor-patient to have some thoughts about their treatment options and wish to discuss these. Navigating these issues can require clear and

frank conversation, but the need for this does not make the doctor-patient a difficult patient. Sometimes, it is necessary to make a longer consultation time to discuss these issues. Managing any health literate patient can be challenging for all doctors. Taking the time to listen to the patient can make a big difference. Recognising that the doctor-patient's demands can reflect elements of anxiety can enable engagement with compassion.

At the end of the consultation, ensure the doctor-patient is aware of the follow up plans. Simply saying to 'come back if you are worried' will result in the doctor-patient feeling uncertain about when they should return if the relationship is still new. Although your patient is health literate, they may still need help to ensure they practice a healthy lifestyle.

### **Relevant Peer-Reviewed Articles**

Hutton CJ, Kay M, Round P, Barton C. "Do they think I'm good enough?": General practitioners' experiences when treating doctor-patients. *BMC Primary Care*. 2024; 25:340.

Hutton CJ, Kay M, Round P, Barton C. Doctors' experiences when treating doctor-patients: a scoping review. *BJGP Open*. 2023; 7(4):BJGPO.2023.0090.

Sebastián-Sánchez I, Gállego-Royo A, Marco-Gómez B, Pérez-Álvarez C, Urbano Gonzalo O, Delgado-Marroquín MT, Altisent-Trota R, Astier-Peña MP. Gender analysis of Spanish National Questionnaire on behaviours and attitudes of doctors towards their own illness (CAMAPE). *J Healthc Qual Res*. 2023 May-Jun;38(3):165-179. doi: 10.1016/j.jhqr.2022.11.006. Epub 2022 Dec 20. PMID: 36549947.

Astier-Peña MP, Gallego-Royo A, Marco-Gómez B, Pérez-Álvarez C, Delgado-Marroquín MT, Altisent-Trota R. Behaviour and attitudes of Spanish physicians towards their own process of falling ill: Study protocol and validation of CAMAPE questionnaire. *J Healthc Qual Res*. 2022 Nov-Dec;37(6):349-356. doi: 10.1016/j.jhqr.2022.04.004. Epub 2022 Jun 5. PMID: 35676170.

Kay M. I know to look after myself – I'm a doctor! *O&G Magazine*. Winter, 2020; 22(2). Available at: <https://www.ogmagazine.org.au/author/margaret-kay/>

Pérez-Álvarez C, Gallego-Royo A, Marco-Gómez B, Martínez-Boyer T, Altisent R, Delgado-Marroquín MT, Astier-Peña MP. Resident Physicians as Patients: Perceptions of Residents and Their Teaching Physicians. *Acad Psychiatry*. 2019 Feb;43(1):67-70. doi: 10.1007/s40596-018-0981-8. Epub 2018 Sep 27. PMID: 30264275.

Kay M, Dawes V. Working together to ensure health care access for doctors. *Med J Aust*. 2019; 211(11):497-498.e1.

Kay M, Mitchell G, Clavarino A, Frank E. Developing a framework for understanding doctors' health access: a qualitative study of Australian GPs. *Aust J Prim Health*. 2012; 18:158-65.

Kay M, Mitchell G, Clavarino A. What doctors want? A consultation method when the patient is a doctor. *Aust J Prim Health*. 2010; 16(1):52-59.

Kay M, Mitchell G, Clavarino A, Doust J. Doctors as Patients: a systematic review of doctors' health access and the barriers they experience. *Br J Gen Pract*. 2008; 58(552):501-508.

**Doctors' Health Curriculum-examples of what a curriculum could include:**

RACGP 2022 Doctors' Health Curriculum Chapter

<https://www.racgp.org.au/education/education-providers/curriculum/curriculum-and-syllabus/units/doctors-health>

RACGP 2016 Doctors' Health Curriculum Chapter

<https://www.racgp.org.au/FSDDEDEV/media/documents/Education/Curriculum/dh16-doctors-health-contextual-unit.pdf>

RACGP 2011 Curriculum Document including the Doctors' Health Curriculum Chapter

<https://www.racgp.org.au/FSDDEDEV/media/documents/Education/Curriculum/2011-Curriculum.pdf>