

for his or her patients—before it becomes so severe it is impossible to alleviate, has adverse consequences on patient care, and is brought to the attention of the board of medicine, the NCCPA, and the public.

Physician assistants and physicians with known problems, or even concerns regarding a potential problem concerning themselves and/or a colleague, can now confidentially contact the WVMPHP for information, intake interviews, interventions, referral for appropriate treatment, and enrollment in this monitoring program if required—all voluntary and confidential.

The WVMPHP also permits an HCP to voice their concerns regarding a colleague without immediately subjecting the colleague to the scrutiny of a regulatory agency or fear or reprisal and guilt if they are incorrect regarding the suspicion. The WVMPHP will instigate an informal investigation and perform an intervention and get the individual into an appropriate treatment program if necessary.

If the impaired HCP agrees to voluntarily enroll in the WVMPHP program, follow the monitoring program, comply with their treatment protocol, including abstinence if substance abuse is the problem, the condition will not be reported to any agency. In fact, the WVMPHP can actually act as an advocate for the impaired HCP with the above agencies.

The WVMPHP itself does not provide treatment; however, the WVMPHP ensures the impaired HCP receives appropriate treatment from a qualified practitioner. Additionally, the WVMPHP is not a place where impaired HCPs can “hide” from regulatory agencies. If the enrollee does not follow the monitoring protocol, the treatment plan, etc., the WVMPHP has no choice but to report the impaired HCP to the appropriate agencies, because again, the WVMPHP also has a primary role to protect the public.

Remember that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” So, if you, or a PA or physician colleague you know, have a known or a potential impairing condition that could prevent medicine from being practiced safely, call the WVMPHP today at 1-304-414-0400 before a patient, HCP, colleague, or loved one is irrevocably harmed.

#### REFERENCES

1. Hall PB. “What is a physician health program?” *West Virginia Medical Journal*. 2007;103:32-34.


[PA, continued from p. 5]

up to spin the wheel, which contained questions about the PA profession. One of the questions was “What is a Physician Assistant?” These are some of the answers that were received: “A Physician Assistant assists the doctor,” “A PA does what the doctor does but doesn’t get paid for it.” Other responses were: “My doctor is a PA,” “A PA is a Public Accountant,” and my personal favorite, “A Physician Assistant is a bone doctor.” This opened the door for the group to educate the community on the duties and responsibilities of the PA profession while at the same time promoting the field as a whole.

The fun didn’t stop there; PA week was extended into the month of November. A blood drive was held on the Campus of MSU on Nov. 4, 2008. The Old Health Sciences building served as the location for the blood drive, while the PA department along with Phi Sigma Phi National Fraternity and the American Red Cross sponsored the drive. We received donations from varying community organizations (i.e. Kroger, Cracker Barrel, Maxwell’s, Mountain State Miniature Golf, Staples, and Chick-fil-A). Several members from the PA class of 2011 and Phi Sigma Phi National Fraternity began their day by hitting up the local radio stations in order to publicize the event, while others were featured on the local news. “Vote to save a Life” was the theme of the drive, and everyone was encouraged to vote and then stop by MSU to donate blood. The day proved to be a success: 48 people presented to donate blood; 24 usable units of blood were collected, and out of the 48 people that presented, 19 people were first-time donors. As a result of the increased turnout, the blood drive was extended to Thursday Nov. 7, 2008. On this day, the American Red Cross provided a bus which was parked outside Hogan Hall and 15-20 usable units of blood were collected.

PA week 2008 at Mountain State University is one for the history books. As a result of the various activities, we increased awareness of the Physician Assistant Program, developed a rapport with the community, and established valuable contacts with various organization. I would personally like to thank everyone who played a part in helping to make PA Week 2008 a great success!

—Leslie Hopkins,  
MSU PA Class of 2011



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