Abstract

Background and Objectives: Physician health programs (PHPs) have demonstrated efficacy, but their mechanism of influence is unclear. This study sought to identify essential components of PHP care management for substance use disorder (SUD), and to assess whether positive outcomes are sustained over time.

Methods: Physicians with DSM-IV diagnoses of Substance Dependence and/or Substance Abuse who had successfully completed a PHP monitoring agreement at least 5 years before the study ($N = 343$) were identified as eligible. Of the 143 (42%) that could be reached by phone, 93% ($n = 133$; 86% male) completed the anonymous online survey.

Results: Virtually all PHP program components were rated as being at least "somewhat helpful" in promoting recovery, with the plurality of respondents rating almost all components as "extremely helpful." The top-rated components were: signing a PHP monitoring agreement, participation in the PHP, formal SUD treatment, and attending 12-step meetings, with each receiving a mean rating of at least 6.2 out of 7. Notably, 88% of respondents endorsed continued participation in 12-step fellowships. Despite the significant financial burden of PHP participation, 85% of respondents reported they believed the total financial cost of PHP participation was "money well spent."

Discussion and Conclusions: Components of PHP monitoring were viewed as acceptable and helpful to physicians who completed the program, and outcomes were generally sustained over 5 years. More studies are needed to confirm these preliminary findings.

Scientific Significance: This study documents the perceived cost-benefit of participation in a PHP among a small sample of program completers.