

Alberta Doctors' Digest

PFSP captures international attention

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Physician wellness is a key component in maintaining the effectiveness of our health care system. As one of the top physician care programs in Canada, the Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) continues to ensure physicians are receiving the best possible support.

Dr. Terrie Brandon, Clinical and Program Director of PFSP, recently traveled to Spain to attend an international conference centered on the quality of mental health resources available to physicians. She was invited by the Catalonia Medical Council to speak at the conference in Barcelona because they wanted to showcase physician health programs from various countries and they had heard that PFSP is one of the most successful programs in Canada.

At the conference, Dr. Brandon found that the practices of supporting mental health varied from country to country, but she also found that the core philosophies were the same. "All agreed that mental health and addictions problems are health issues that require effective and timely treatment for physicians," Dr. Brandon shares. "All programs are working to reduce stigma around these issues. And all of us agree that physicians have multiple barriers to seeking help."



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Throughout the conference, Dr. Brandon engaged with health care professionals from around the world. She was intrigued to see why each country implements their programs in different ways. Population size and density, and the history of each country's development of their programs, emerged as key factors in how each country's physicians access the programs.

"I think that a lot of the difference has to do with how long the programs have been in existence and having a population that can support whatever type of program that they offer," Dr. Brandon explains.

Dr. Brandon, who was also a presenter at the conference, impressed those attending with the level of care and support given to Alberta physicians. One of the fundamental programs she spoke about is the 24/7 hotline provided by PFSP. The unique thing about this program, Dr. Brandon told conference attendees, is who we have providing support on the other end of the line. "Each physician who calls in to that line for support speaks to another physician, so there's an element of peer support right from the beginning when people call in."

She also made sure to shine a spotlight on the support pillars of our program. PFSP is privileged to have access to a geographically diverse group of over 600 therapists who meet with and treat Alberta physicians. The assistance of these and other supporting health care professionals have been instrumental in the success of PFSP, and Dr. Brandon was excited to showcase these programs with the international community.

Attending the conference was an honor, says Dr. Brandon. "I was very fortunate to be able to meet with colleagues who support physicians in various countries and hear about their challenges and their successes in treating physicians."

The biggest takeaway, Dr. Brandon says, was the affirmation of how well suited PFSP is to caring for Alberta's physicians. It is a physician's calling to care for others. It is PFSP's calling to care for physicians.

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