

The Vulnerable Physician: Substance Use Disorders in Doctors

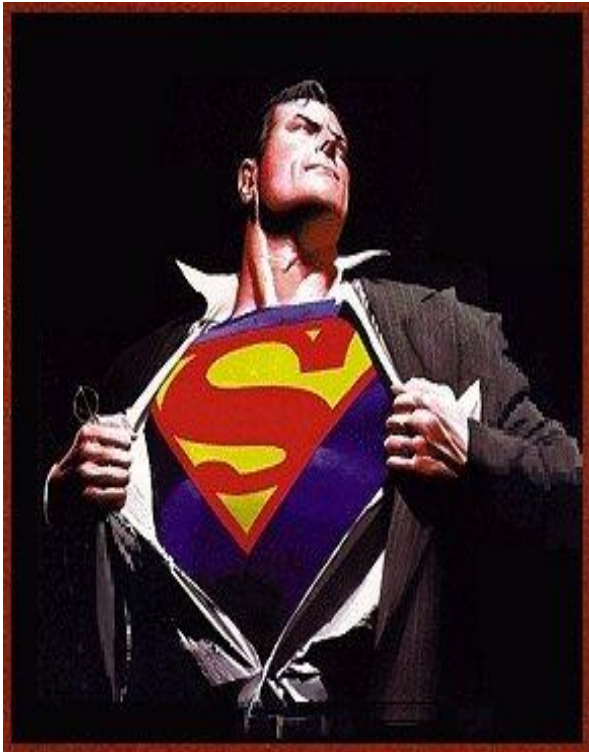
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Director, Physician Health Program
Ontario Medical Association

Men are from Mars,
Women are from
Venus...

Doctors are from
Krypton



Invincible?



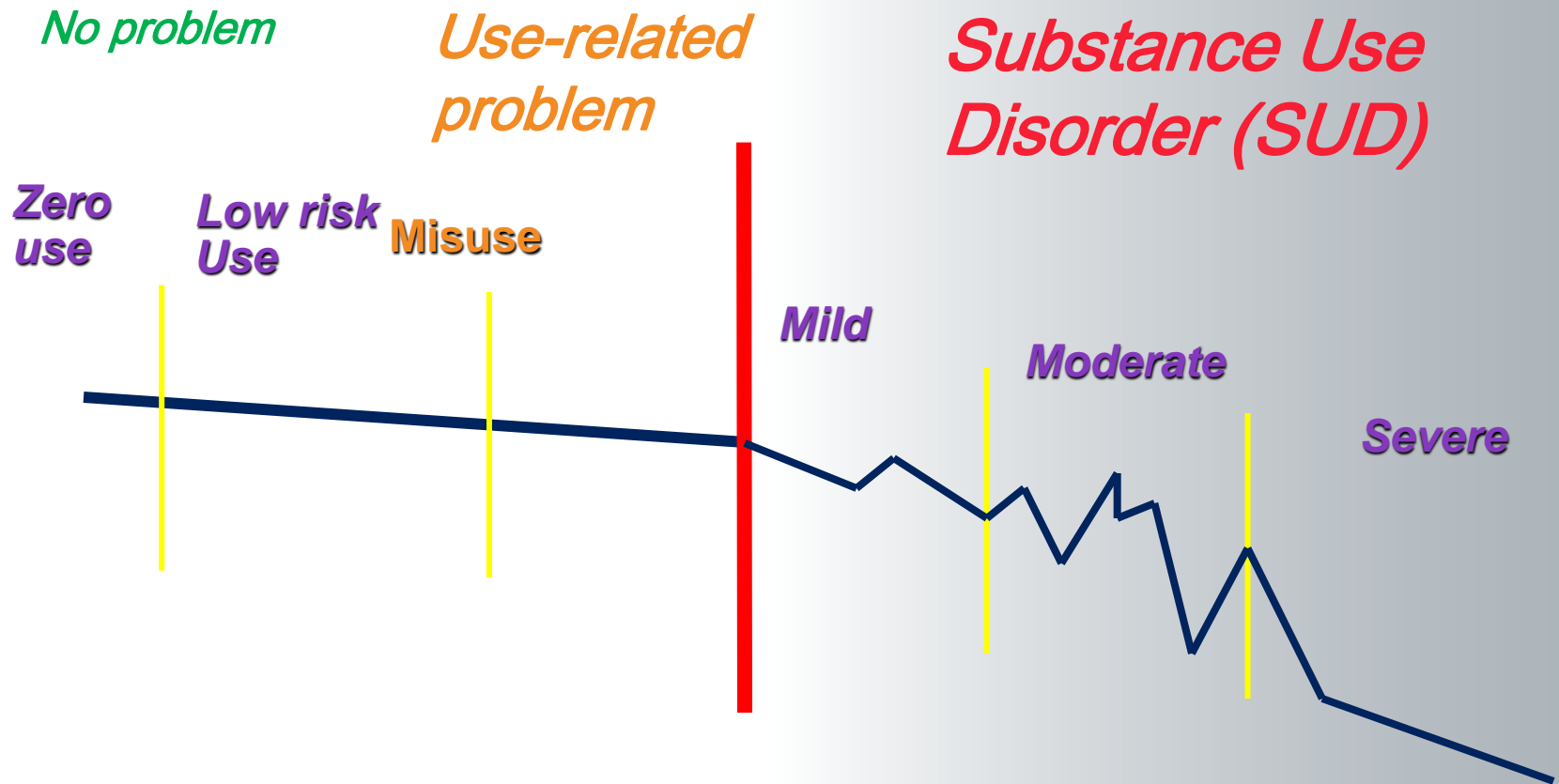
Physician health

- Doctors tend to live longer
- Doctors generally have good health habits
- Risk of Substance Use Disorders and Psychiatric Disorders
 - But shame, stigma contribute to late presentation
- Suicide rates might be higher
 - Especially for female doctors



“Mind you, only one doctor out of ten recommends it.”

Spectrum of Substance Use / Abuse



DSM 5 Diagnostic Criteria

- 11 criteria in 4 groupings (2-3=mild, 4-5=moderate, 6+=severe)
 1. Impaired Control
 - Inability to quit or cut down, using more than intended, time spent, craving
 2. Social (functional) Impairment
 - School, work, home obligations not met
 - Social and relationship problems
 - Social, occupational, recreational activities abandoned
 3. Risky Use (using despite)
 - Hazardous situations
 - Physical or mental illness / psychological problems
 4. Pharmacological (Physiological)
 - Tolerance and withdrawal

Risk

Set

- Genetic factors / family history
- Use of substances at an early age

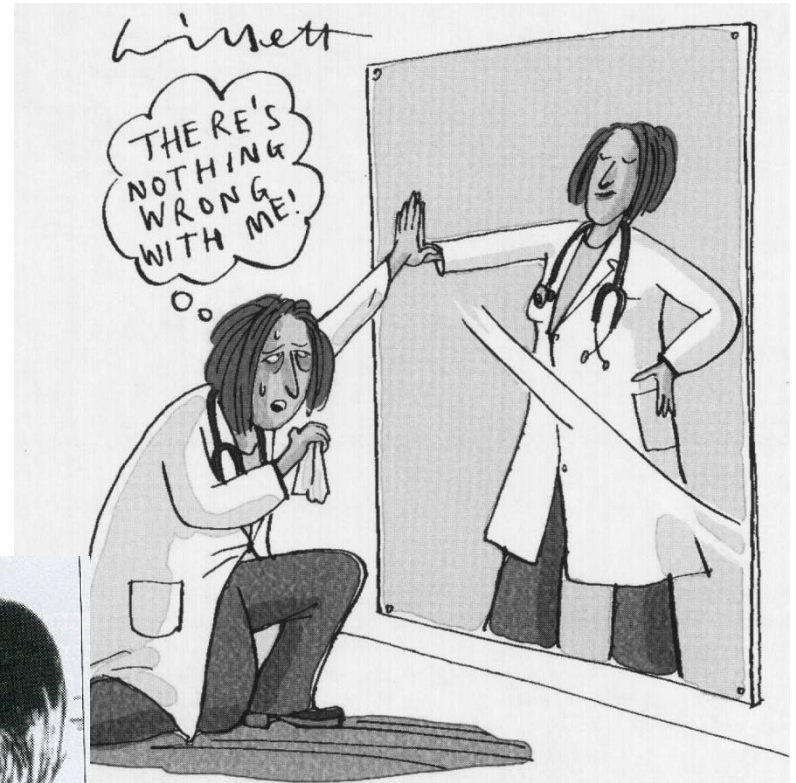
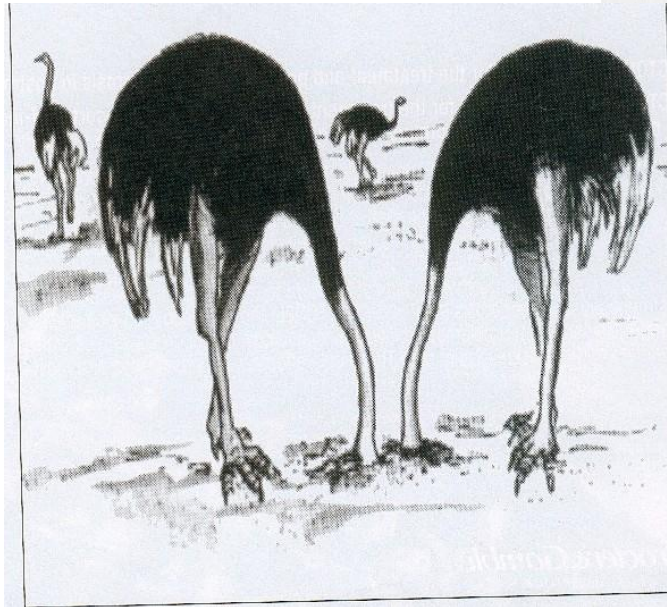
Setting

- Stressors
- Coping skills (or lack)

Substance

- Exposure, access
- Euphoric recall

There are many barriers to seeking help



“Early” Signs:

- Increased expression of negative thoughts, feelings, attitudes
- Increased somatic complaints, illness and fatigue
- Less well dressed and groomed
- Declining reliability
- Emergence of unhealthy coping behaviours
- More time at work
- Heavy drinking at professional and other social events
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Family tension, conflict, infidelity

Later Signs:

- Angry outbursts at work
- Patient and staff complaints
- Professional withdrawal
- Cancelled clinics and increased absenteeism
- Deterioration of clinical skills and performance
- Drug diversion, inappropriate drug handling
- Alcohol on the breath at work
- Signs of withdrawal at work
- Family violence, separation and divorce

End Stage Signs:

- Drug using, drinking, intoxication at work
- Appearance of chronic illness
- Therapeutic error or mishap
- Extreme personal isolation
- Suicidal gesturing or
- Suicide

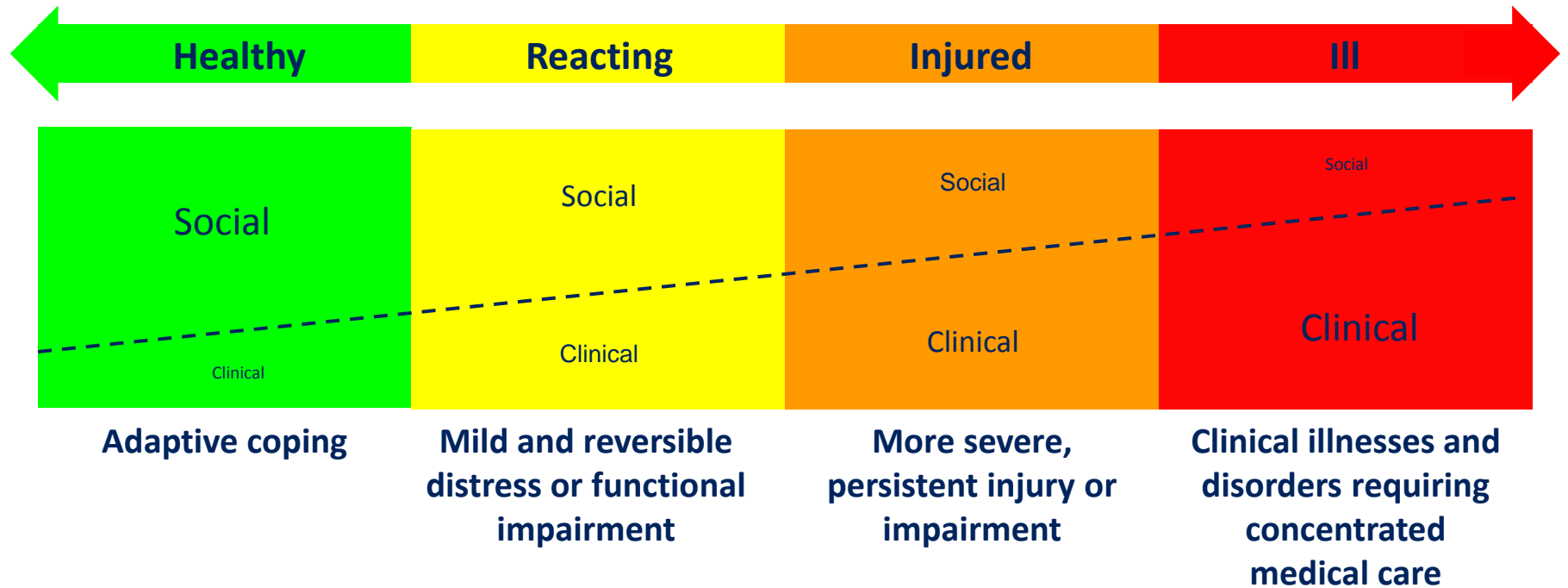
The Tip of the Iceberg

Usually the workplace is the last place where distress and impairment shows ... so even minor persistent changes in a physician's behaviour should be taken seriously



EVEN
SUPERHEROES
NEED HELP
SOMETIMES.

Peer support in the workplace



Grenier, MHI Consulting, 2012

Bystander

“A person who does not become actively involved when someone else requires help.”

Petruska Clarkson

The Bystander

Bystanding slogans:

- “It’s none of my business.”
- “I don’t have enough information.”
- “What if I’m wrong?”
- “I don’t want to get burned again.”
- “There’s nothing I can do to help.”
- “They did this to themselves and they have to ask for help.”
- “What if I hurt them?”
- “What if they hurt me?”

Supporting a colleague

- Reflect your observations and concerns
- Ask how they are feeling
- Offer time to talk
- Offer time to spend together quietly
- Offer helping resources
- Facilitate use of helping resources
- Follow up

Intervention:

“Sometimes it’s not so much seeing the light as feeling the heat.”

Unknown

Intervention

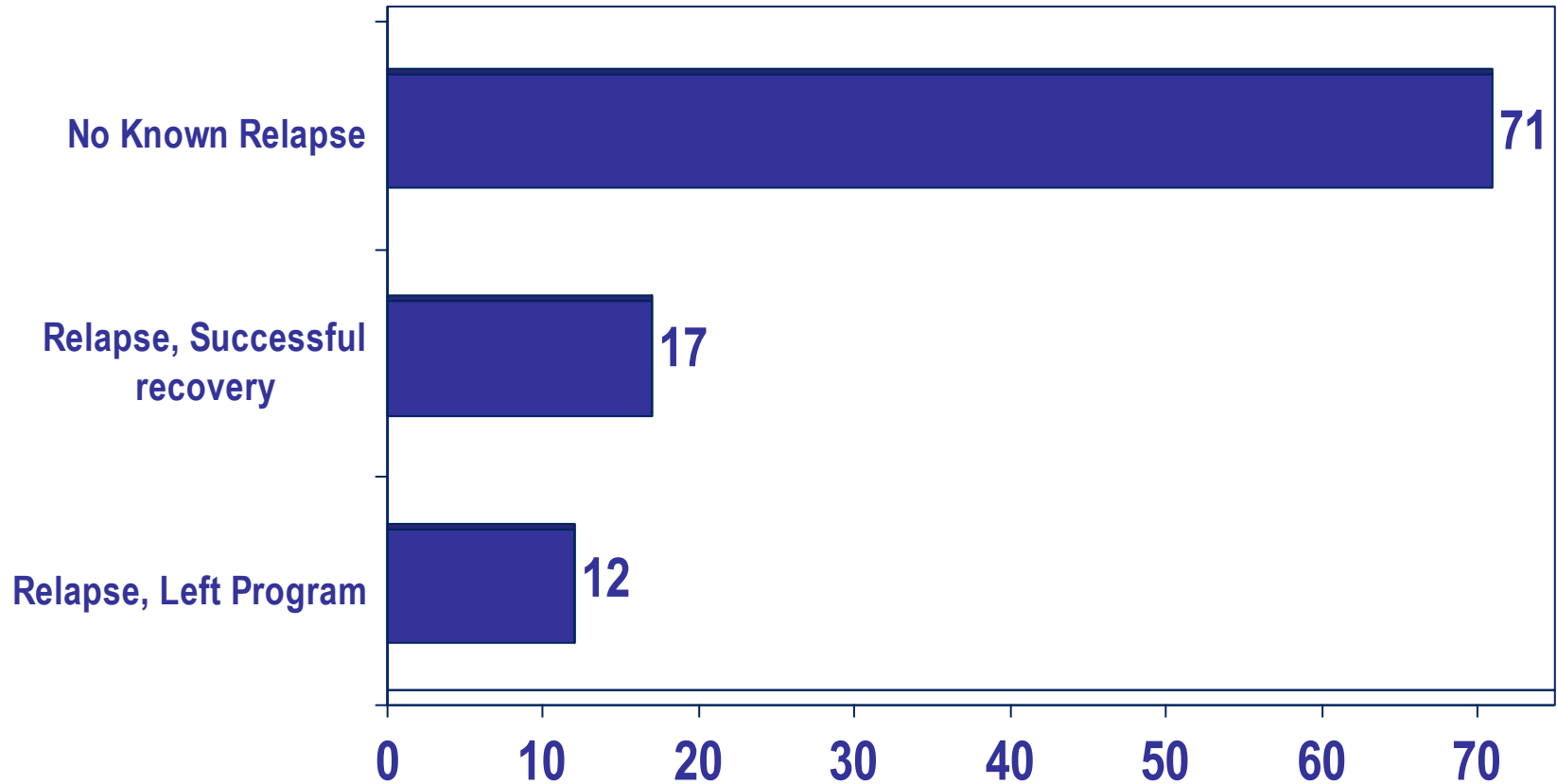
- seek advice first
- positive and motivational
- documented evidence
- planned and rehearsed
- assessment pre-arranged
- caring and compassionate
- **consequences clear**

Treatment of addiction in doctors:

- Abstinence based
- Often inpatient
- Detox
- Education
- Group support
- Twelve Step facilitation
- Identification of co-morbid disorders
- Family support
- Long term monitoring / case management

PHP First 100 Relapse Data

(Brewster, Kaufmann et. al. BMJ, Nov 2008)



PHP Services

Information and Advice

Intervention Services

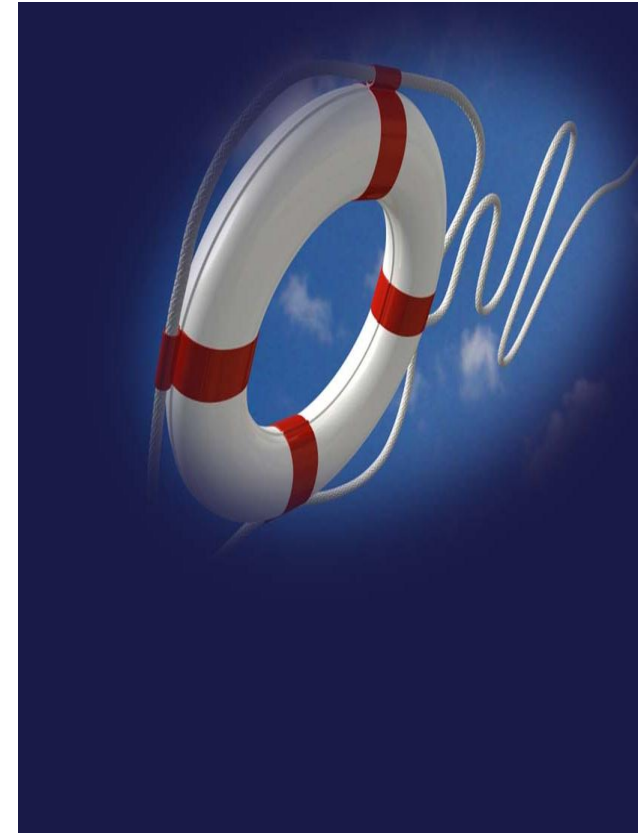
Assessment and Referral

Monitoring & Case Management

Advocacy

Family Support

Education and Prevention



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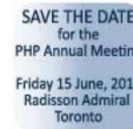
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