

ReMed provides peer-level support

GP again following a severe life crisis

Following a severe private and professional crisis, a dedicated general practitioner (GP) finds his way back to practising medicine. Here he reports on how, with the help of ReMed, the support network for physicians, his confidence was restored. ReMed's new "Practice internship with a mentoring doctor" project offers additional support to doctors who wish to return to practising medicine following a crisis.

"Due to a severe depression brought on by exhaustion, I was no longer capable of practising my profession as a GP. I lost not only my fulfilling life as a country doctor, but also my children and my home following a separation. As a result, the very foundation of my professional and private life was shattered.

I received help from, among others, ReMed in the form of regular telephone calls. The main aim of these conversations was to provide support and advice as well as to determine my professional outlook and plan my return to GP practice. The Swiss Doctors' Health Insurance (SAEKK) provided financial assistance in the form of sick pay, which was a great relief. Nevertheless the chronic state of unemployment or inability to work proved a great strain, as a result of which I repeatedly suffered from depression and feelings of isolation. My upcoming divorce, the separation from my children and lack of social contact in my new place of residence were an additional burden on my state of mind. Although at the time I would not have been capable of practising as a GP, I missed this fulfilling occupation.

Branded as an invalid and without prospects

In the spring of 2010 I felt a little better, and applied for jobs with insurance companies and, in particular, with GPs, asking if I could work in their practice as a means of returning to my profession. It was extremely frustrating, as most doctors rejected my application. The fact that I had not worked for a year for health reasons was apparently regarded by them as too great a risk. The mistrust they showed towards me ate away at my self-esteem and I felt branded as an invalid.

Half a year later the lack of work and structure to the day, coupled with my professional and social isolation, triggered another depression in me which required outpatient treatment. Once my illness had been successfully treated with drugs and psychological therapy, I finally felt better again. I began to apply for jobs and after two years of being unemployed I struck lucky: A medical acquaintance offered me the opportunity to help out in his practice on a 50% basis. This took the form of a "work trial" and was co-funded by the SAEKK.

A cautious return to my profession

To begin with, I handled patients under supervision of the owner of the practice, but over time I became increasingly independent. My anxieties – in particular my fear of inadequacy – disappeared. After around two months I felt professionally and personally confident and ready to apply for other positions. I found a 70% position as a general practitioner in a large city emergency practice. With the initial support from this practice I thankfully became fully re-integrated in my profession as a general practitioner.

I believe it is very important for colleagues who are going through a difficult time of life to receive help early. It is also important that they get the opportunity to return to their profession even after a lengthy illness, if this is what they really want to do. In particular, it is essential that their return to work remains in the hands of our profession, and is not achieved through the lengthy, impersonal, cost-inducing and scarcely relevant channels of disability insurance. I believe we should show solidarity not only to our patients but also to our professional colleagues who find themselves facing an uncertain personal and professional future due to an emergency situation!"

"Returner- practice internships": Pilot project seeks mentoring doctors and returners

Colleagues who have ceased to practice due to a life crisis can suffer feelings of insecurity before returning to their own practice. A practice internship with a mentoring doctor can help them to regain confidence and self-assurance for their responsible work. During an internship lasting several weeks, the doctor works under the supervision of his/her mentor, regaining confidence in his/her ability and identifying any gaps in his/her medical, social and practical skills.

In view of the growing scarcity of basic service providers, the advantages of this type of cooperation for mentoring doctors are the possibility of finding a colleague to act as their locum or take over their practice, and of promoting the quality and credentials of the practice. Ideally, mentors have experience as teaching doctors and are experienced, established doctors who are familiar with ReMed's services.

Are you looking for an established doctor with whom you could take on a returner internship? Or are you interested in acting as a mentoring doctor to help a colleague return to work? A pilot phase is being operated until the end of 2017. Are you interested or affected? If so, e-mail [info\[at\]swiss-remed.ch](mailto:info[at]swiss-remed.ch) or telephone 031 359 12 00 now.

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