



From the Director of the Office of Staff Wellbeing



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY
Department of Anesthesiology & Pain Medicine

Sue's News: September Newsletter

■ Hello everyone,



Ramsey Gibb

Much has been written recently about physician burnout, depression and suicide. Courageous family members such as Susan Bryant have openly shared their grief and loss in the hope of alerting the medical community to this issue ([click here](#) to read her letter).

Before I go on, if you are suffering, struggling with the suicide of a loved one or feeling lost and alone for any reason please, please get help. Call one of the confidential help lines below. Now.

Physician and Family Support Program 1- 877-767-4637

Mental Health Help Line 1- 877-303-2642

anesthesiology.med.ualberta.ca
2-150 Clinical Sciences Building
8440-112 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G3
Twitter: [@UAlbertaAnesth](https://twitter.com/UAlbertaAnesth)

Why am I writing about this? Because I believe it is essential that we are honest, that we speak out about the dark side of medicine and its impact.

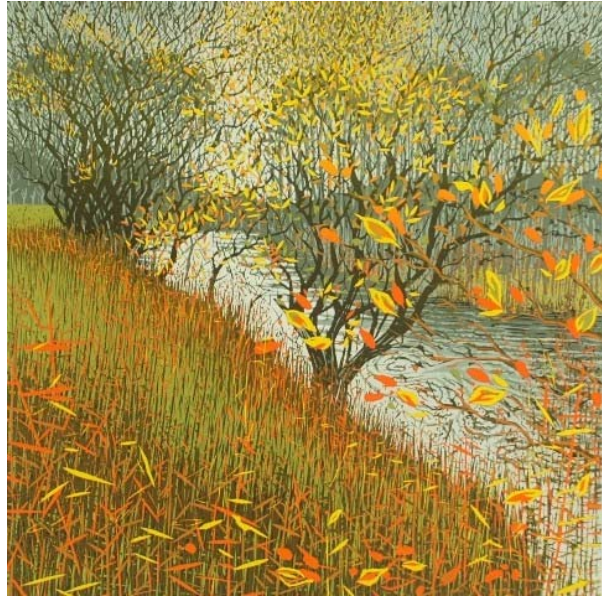
We will never know for sure why a physician decides to end his/her life, but many of us would like an answer to the question What now? What will change? The sad and cynical reply that is often heard is, nothing. Nothing will change.

Physicians are not passive people. We are problem solvers, we are practical, and we get stuff done. So let's ask ourselves again, What now? What will we change?

What can I do, what can we do together, how do we honor the memory of our colleagues? How do we learn from tragedy and move towards building a community where no one feels that the only solution to their pain is to end their life?

I hope the answer is **We will change the culture.**

I think that means we must recognize ourselves as human beings first and physicians second.



Mark A. Pearce

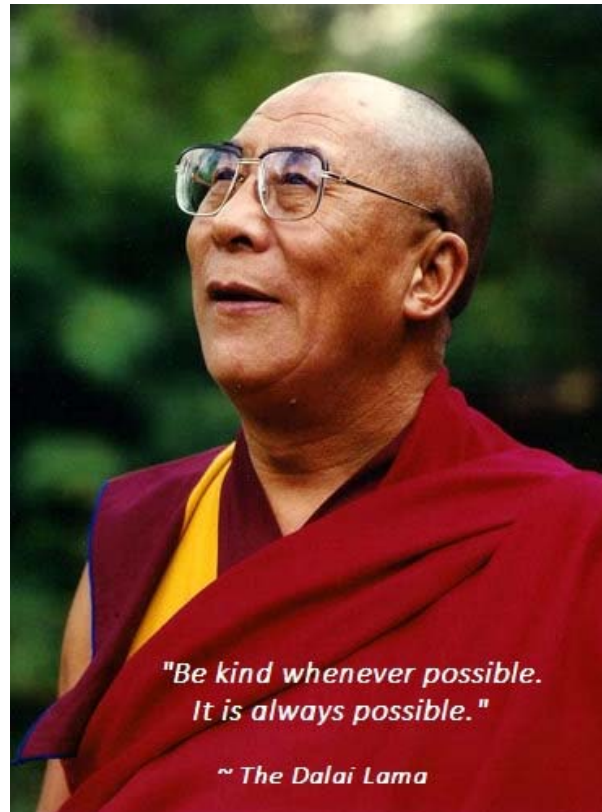
A distressing event happened in the OR the other day. It did not involve a patient, but it upset me to the point that I needed someone to take over my list. I know that other colleagues might well not have felt the same. Within 15 minutes someone was inducing my next patient and a much younger male colleague came down from case room, sat with me and gave me a hug. No judgement. Thank you Ken, I know it wasn't easy but it was very much appreciated!

Here are my suggestions towards a compassionate and sustainable medical culture in Alberta.

Starting now.

- * We will educate ourselves and our learners about physician mental health.
- * We commit to truly taking care of ourselves.
- * We will not tolerate toxic environments, bullying, harassment or abuse.
- * We will challenge ridiculous demands that are incompatible with our basic human needs for rest and recuperation.
- * We will support our colleagues.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead



Let's remember that being kind includes being kind to ourselves.

Thank you for reading,
Sue

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