



TMF Growing Pains Require Growing Support

Physicians Health Program Message

The Tennessee Medical Foundation (TMF) and the critical help it provides physicians through the Physicians Health Program (PHP) are like insurance – you don't think about it until you need it.

That analogy from TMF Administrator Michael Todd, who said the Foundation's work to restore physicians with chemical dependency or other behavioral issues generally enjoys a low profile. "Most people do not get passionate about these types of issues until they have some personal involvement," he stated.

GROWING SERVICES & NEEDS

Currently, the PHP is in a period of growth – staff and program expansions – driven by the rising need for the restoration it offers, which has increased the need for more private funding. TMF officials are hoping to raise the Foundation's profile in Tennessee's medical community to generate the financial support needed to help more physicians.

"In 2003, we had 119 total new identifications," Todd said, referring to the number of physicians identified as candidates for PHP assistance. "That number rose to 196 in 2004 and through the first six months of 2005, we have had 103 identifications. Our needs are continuing to grow, and one of the biggest changes – a real plus – is we're getting more self-referrals because physicians are feeling more comfortable about what we do and how we are helping people," he added.

HELPING PHYSICIANS & PATIENTS

As spelled out in the PHP's mission statement, the protection of patients and the rehabilitation of physicians in need is something every physician cares about, according to Todd. "Whether they've benefited personally from this program, their patients and communities do," he said. "It's a great program, something that helps physicians in working with their colleagues, working with themselves, and protecting their patients."

PHP services are offered without charge, unlike most programs of this type throughout the country. TMF's commitment to continue offering free assistance was affirmed in a recent letter sent out to the physician community.

"This record of *advocacy provided without charge* is one we can all be proud of because it indicates a deep level of caring and commitment among physicians in Tennessee," said the letter from TMF President David Gerkin, MD, and Medical Director Roland Gray, MD.

PHP support comes from a variety of sources: State Volunteer Mutual Insurance Program (SVMIC); hospitals; the Tennessee Medical Association; the State Board of Medical Examiners (BME); physician donations; and the balance from other sources, such as grants and donations from component medical societies and specialty societies.

It is the funding from individual physicians that TMF officials would like to increase.

“We really need physician support; they’re the people who see the value in it, and it’s like insurance -- something that’s there when they need it,” Todd stated. “If we weren’t here, what would that be like?”

The Tennessee Medical Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization funded solely by contributions. The TMF is recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by applicable law. For information on becoming a private supporter of the TMF and its PHP, log on to www.e-tmf.org or contact Michael Todd, TMF Administrator, at 615-467-6411.

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