



# 27 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL COUNCILS OF AFRICA



REGULATOR 2.0  
THE BALANCED APPROACH



# THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT IN MANAGING IMPAIREMENT

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# Outline

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# Introduction

- The healthcare profession is demanding and stressful.
- Health professionals' impairment resulting from various challenges (mental health – depression and anxiety, behavioural – substance abuse, or physical health – illness or injury) can affect performance of the professional increasing the occurrence of:
  - Medical errors
  - Patients' complaints and litigation
  - Workforce attrition
- Health professionals have a risk of developing impairment of 1 in 4 during their career (*Bruce 2005, Baldisseri 2007*)
- Regulators have a duty to protect patients while supporting the recovery and safe practice of the impaired professionals
- Peer support is an essential tool in achieving this balance

# Peer Support

- Various peer support programs have been described in the literature
- No formal programs in many AMCOA Countries
- In countries where available, services are underutilised – Fear, stigma, confidentiality
- Personal example: Emotional support provided by colleagues with shared experience



# Peer Support

- Early identification and intervention of impairment
  - Minimizes harm to patients and professionals
- The culture of compassion reducing Stigma and isolation
- Encouraging Help-Seeking behavior
- Provides emotional resilience and coping strategies
  - Improves workforce morale and longevity
- Shared responsibility fosters trust and accountability



# Benefits of Peer Support- Regulation

- Facilitates non punitive approaches.
  - Encourages reporting of errors and near misses without fear, promoting a culture of safety and transparency
  - Fosters a learning environment
  - Improves patient safety
- Encourages self-reporting and compliance
  - Promotes transparency and accountability while professionals take responsibility for their actions
  - Early detection and intervention – reducing risk of harm to patients
- Enhances safe reintegration into practice
  - Protects patients – professionals are fit to return to practice without posing harm to patients
  - Maintains public trusts

# Risks And Ethical Considerations

- Confidentiality vs. Duty to report (patient safety)
  - Balancing support with safety obligations
- Compassion and Accountability (Boundary Management)
  - Peers must avoid acting as therapists or enablers
- Support and regulatory responsibility

# Conclusion

- Impairment is a real and manageable risk in medical regulation
- Peer support compliments regulatory goals by promoting recovery and professionalism.
- Compassionate, evidence-based approaches enhance both patient safety and clinician