Graduate Student Mental Health: National Trends and Strategies

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2018 study in Nature Biotechnology

- Graduate students are 6x more likely to experience depression and anxiety than the general population
- 41% scored moderate to severe anxiety on the GAD7 compared to 6% of the general population
- 39% scored moderate to severe depression on the PHQ9 compared to 6% of the general population
- Transgender/non-conforming gender and women have higher rates of anxiety and depression
- 7% reported seriously considering suicide in the past year (Eisenberg, 2018)

Source: ACHA-NCHA Survey 2016
Factors impacting mental health
• Poor work-life balance
• Long hours, little pay
• Pressure to produce/competition for grant funding
• Lack of “real” mentorship
• Don’t feel valued by PI/mentor
• PI/mentor not viewed as asset to their career
• Financial concerns – debt
• Few job prospects
• Isolation
• Lack of social support
Comprehensive Approach for Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health
We believe in a **comprehensive, public health approach** to promoting emotional well-being and preventing suicide and serious substance abuse. **Campus-wide responsibility**

**Support from Senior Leadership**
Strategies

• **Life Skills**
  – Self care  Faculty need to role model
  – Stress reduction  Mindfulness, yoga

• **Social Connectedness**
  – Sense of isolation
  – Increase peer support (groups, opportunity to gather)

• **Identifying Students at Risk**
  – Educate/train everyone on campus – especially faculty and students

• **Increase Help Seeking**
  – Stigma reduction campaigns
  – Storytelling – lived experience (Daniel Jackson  Portraits of Resilience  MIT)
Strategies

- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**
  - Diverse staff
  - Accessibility (fee, hours, insurance)
  - Referral system

- **Crisis Management**
  - MOU’s with area hospitals
  - Leave policies

- **Means Restriction**
  - Environmental scan
  - Secure potentially dangerous areas
  - Drug collection days
Thank you.

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