Wellness and Well-Being: Ethics and Professionalism Implications

Andrew J. Demetriou
Lamb & Kawakami, LLP
Berkeley Research Group, LLC
Los Angeles, California

Recognition of Mental Health Issues in the Profession

"To be a good lawyer, one has to be a healthy lawyer."

"The research suggests that that current state of lawyers' health cannot support a profession dedicated to client service and dependent on the public trust."

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Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- **The practice of law is highly stressful, characterized by long hours, resolution of complex and sometimes emotionally charged issues and tight time frames.**
- **The successful practice of law involves anticipation of potential problems and this sort of pessimistic thinking is highly correlated with depression.**
- **Behavioral health problems are also present among law students, in some instances at higher rates than practicing lawyers.**

Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- **The Krill, Johnson and Albert Study (2016)**
  - **12,825 practicing lawyers surveyed**
  - **Behavioral health problems detected at significantly higher rates than other highly educated participants in the workforce.**
  - **Key markers—depression (28%), anxiety (19%), stress (23%) and problematic drinking (20.6%).**
  - **Unable to draw conclusions about prevalence of substance abuse (other than alcohol) as 75% of respondents refused to answer survey questions.**

Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- **The Organ, Jaffe and Bender Study (2016)**
  - **3,300 law students surveyed**
  - **High rates of drunkenness (53% within the past 30 days), frequent instances of binge drinking (22% reporting twice or more in the prior 14 days), illicit drug use (25% within the past 12 months) and abuse of prescription medications (e.g., Adderall).**
  - **High rates of anxiety (37%), depression (17%) and suicidal thoughts (6%).**
  - **Low rates of law students recognizing a need for help actually seeking it, with the rate among males significantly lower than females.**

Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- **Imposter syndrome—maladaptive perfectionism.**
- **Loneliness and isolation, correlated with depression and stress.**
  - **Harvard Business Review—law practice is the loneliest profession.**
- **Cognitive impairment due to aging.**
- **Suicide and suicidal tendencies.**
  - **11.5% report suicidal thoughts at some point in their careers and 2.9% report self-injurious behaviors.**
  - **The case of Gabriel McConail.**

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