Growing the Peer Support Program at BIDMC

The Problem
In the course of day-to-day care of patients our clinicians are put in challenging, stressful, and often upsetting situations. The emotional aftermath of a death of a patient, a difficult code, or an adverse event can be difficult to deal with, especially alone. In 2013, a successful pilot Peer Support Program was launched, and today includes nearly all inpatient units, perioperative units and the emergency unit. Peer Supporters are volunteer staff from a variety of disciplines that reach out to colleagues, or are available for others to reach out to them.

Aim/Goal
Our goal is two-fold for 2015: we will increase awareness of the Peer Support Program around BIDMC; and work with departments to implement the Peer Support Program.

The Team
Lisa Buchsbaum, HCQ; Melinda Van Niel, HCQ; Pat Folcarelli, HCQ; Steve Pratt, Anesthesia; Barbara DiTullio, PCS; Judi Bieber, Human Resources; Pamela Peck, Psychiatry; Leslie Aji, PCS; Jane Foley, PCS; Phyllis West, PCS; Kristen Russell, PCS; Joanne Devine, PCS; Mary McDonough, PCS; Mary Fay, HCQ; Richard Whyte, MD, Surgery

The Interventions
- Expanded program from PeriOperative Services, Critical Care and Labor and Delivery to Emergency Unit and to all Inpatient Medicine and Surgery Units.
- Developed a 4-hour training program to develop Peer Supporters.
- Successfully recruited and trained 95 Peer Supporters.
- Partnered with Media Services to create a logo and materials to publicize the program.
- Presented the program to hospital and departmental leadership this winter/spring.

The Results/Progress to Date

Lessons Learned
- Some departments may benefit from a different type of Peer Support model, such as group support.
- Many managers expressed that they could benefit from being trained in Peer Support techniques, so we are developing a training for managers to attend.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
- Spread the program by implementing it in EVS, Pathology, Radiology, and the Blood Bank this spring, and into ambulatory by the end of the year.
- Promote the Peer Support Program

For more information, contact:
Lisa Buchsbaum, M.P.H., Project Manager, Patient Safety
lbuchsba@bidmc.harvard.edu