

Pharmacy Professionals Recovery Group

A pharmacy professional with a drug or alcohol problem is in a very lonely place. In their own mind they are the only pharmacist in the world like this. To be able to talk in confidence to someone who has “been there” has been found by many pharmacists to be a very comforting experience. Not only does it give reassurance to the person that they are not alone, but also gives the person hope that there might a way out of their predicament.

Doing nothing, hoping the problem will go away, is not an option – it only gets worse.

There are 12 step groups such as Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous. These mutual aid groups are very valuable, but pharmacy professionals can also benefit from a group that is pharmacy orientated. Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in recovery understand the specific challenges related to addiction within the profession and the experience of the group in Fitness to Practice hearings is especially valuable.

BobD, a pharmacist, who had an alcohol problem, was sent by Pharmacist Support to residential treatment. He was struck by the way the doctors that he met there were well organised for life after they had left the clinic. They met regularly to help each other, be it a word of encouragement, a friendly face or advice in facing fitness to practice hearings. There was no equivalent for pharmacists. After Bob left treatment, he wanted to set up something similar for pharmacists – to be able to reach out and offer a helping hand to colleagues who may be struggling with drugs or alcohol.

Originally, Pharmacist Support set up and paid for a telephone conferencing call, and arranged for Bob to be trained as a facilitator. People contacting Pharmacist Support were added to the group. The group has now been active for more than 10 years and has evolved into the Pharmacy Professionals Recovery Group (PPRG) working alongside, but independently from, Pharmacist Support; (thanks to a grant from Pharmacist Support, we now meet on Zoom).

The PPRG is a group of pharmacists, with varying lengths of sobriety, who offer peer support both collectively and individually. We are looking to broaden our reach to include pharmacy technicians as well as pharmacists. We’d also like to reach pharmacy professionals at an earlier stage before addiction becomes a regulatory issue.

The PPRG meets monthly, via Zoom, on the first Sunday of each month. Any pharmacist or pharmacy technician who thinks they may have a problem with alcohol or drugs can join.

The group can be contacted via email on PharmProfRG@proton.me.