FRONTIER MEDICAL AND DENTAL COLLEGE ABBOTTABAD

Policy for Psychological Counseling of Medical Students

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures and guidelines for providing psychological counseling and mental health support to medical students. The goal is to ensure students have access to mental health resources that promote well-being, resilience, and academic success.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all medical students enrolled in the program, regardless of year or academic standing.

3. Objectives

- To offer accessible and confidential psychological counseling services.
- To promote mental health awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding seeking mental health support.
- To identify students who may need additional support and offer appropriate resources.
- To help students develop coping skills to manage the stresses and demands of medical education.

4. Counseling Services

- **Types of Services Provided:**
    - Individual counseling
    - Group therapy sessions
    - Crisis intervention

    - Workshops and seminars on stress management, mindfulness, and resilience
    - Peer support programs
    - Referrals to external mental health professionals if necessary

- **Counseling Availability:**
  Counseling services would be available during regular working hours with options for urgent or emergency appointments as needed. After-hours support may be available through referrals to hospital emergency services.
- **Location:**
  Counseling services would be in a private, accessible space on or near campus, ensuring confidentiality and comfort for the students.

5. Confidentiality

- All counseling sessions are confidential. Information shared during counseling will not be disclosed without the student's consent, except in cases of imminent harm to the student or others as required by law.
- Counsellors would inform students of the confidentiality boundaries at the start of each session.
- Medical or academic records may be shared with faculty or administrators only with the student’s written consent and when necessary for academic accommodations.

6. Accessibility and Inclusivity

- Counseling services would be free of charge to all medical students and available regardless of a student's financial situation.

- Services would be inclusive and sensitive to diverse backgrounds, including race, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, and socioeconomic status.
- Counseling would be available in multiple languages if necessary to ensure all students have access to support.

7. Mental Health Awareness and Education

- Regular mental health awareness campaigns would be conducted to reduce stigma and encourage students to seek help when needed.
- The medical school curriculum would include training on self-care, mental health awareness, and managing stress.
- Faculty and staff would be trained to recognize signs of mental distress in students and to encourage seeking professional help when appropriate.

8. Referral and Escalation Process

- If a student requires more specialized care than the institution can provide, the counseling centre will refer the student to external mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, or counsellors with appropriate expertise.
- The institution would maintain a list of trusted external providers for referrals.
- A protocol would be in place for students who show signs of severe psychological distress (e.g., suicidal ideation, severe anxiety, depression) to be assessed quickly and receive appropriate care.

9. Student Responsibilities

- Students are encouraged to seek counseling services early if they experience emotional or psychological distress.

- Students must communicate openly and honestly with counsellors about their needs and any factors contributing to their stress.
- Students would be proactive about following up with appointments and recommendations made by counsellors.

10. Support for Faculty and Staff

- Faculty and staff would be trained to support students who may be struggling with mental health issues, recognizing the signs of distress, and making appropriate referrals to the counseling service.
- Faculty and staff would also have access to counseling resources for their own mental health and well-being.

11. Evaluation and Feedback

- The counseling services will undergo regular evaluations to assess their effectiveness, including student satisfaction surveys and feedback.
- The medical would adjust the services based on student needs and feedback to ensure the continued effectiveness of the program.

12. Emergency Protocols

- In case of a mental health crisis (e.g., suicidal ideation, severe emotional distress), immediate intervention must be arranged, and the student would be referred to the nearest emergency department or 24-hour helpline.
- Faculty would be informed of any emergency situations if it impacts the student's academic progress or well-being.

13. Implementation and Oversight

- A designated mental health coordinator or committee would oversee the implementation of this policy.

- The policy would be reviewed annually and revised as needed to meet the evolving needs of the student body.