WARNING SIGNS OF IMPAIRMENT

1. **Community Involvement:**
   - Withdrawal from community, university, or hospital, and its social activities:
   - Embarrassing behavior:
     - Intoxication at social events, fighting with spouses or peers, traffic offenses, DUI/DWI

2. **Home & Family Life:**
   - Embarrassing behavior covered up or explained by family or friends;
   - Domestic violence;
   - Child neglect or abuse;
   - Personality change;
   - Reckless financial ventures or hobbies;
   - Financial crises, income tax problems;
   - Marital or sexual problems;
   - Increasing isolation
     - Drinking comes first - Avoids non-drinking friends.

3. **Occupational History:**
   - Overqualified/inappropriate qualifications for job;
   - Unexplained gaps in C.V./resume;
   - Frequent job changes, reassignments
   - Changes in training program without changes in specialty
   - Vague letters of reference
   - Unusual medical history.

4. **Health Problems:**
   - Multiple physical complaints and illnesses, ill-defined;
   - Poor hygiene, dental care;
   - Frequent accidents, unexplained bruises, injuries;
   - First seizure as an adult;
   - Blackouts;
   - Hypertension, arrhythmias, hepatomegaly.
   - Frequent Ed visits, hospitalizations, AMA sign-outs;
   - Morning vomiting, constipation, diarrhea;
   - Gastritis, GERD, pancreatitis, hepatitis, enteritis;
   - "Alcoholic facies," parotid enlargement, edema, flushing;
   - Inappropriate tremulousness, sweating, yawning, "nodding," tearing.

5. **Office/Clinic Activities:**
   - Retreats from inpatient practice;
   - Workaholic bouts;
   - Frequent office absences;
   - Disorganized work schedule;
   - Unreasonable behavior and demands on staff, colleagues and patients;
   - Increased turnover of office staff;
   - Patient complaints:
     - inattention
     - forgetfulness
     - rudeness
     - inappropriate behavior or remarks
   - Excessive inventory of drugs for office use (procedural areas);
   - Decreased workload/shifting work to others;
   - Handwriting deterioration;
   - Slurred speech and indecision.
6. **Hospital Activities:**
- Odor of alcohol on breath;
- Decline in fulfillment of professional responsibilities (late assignments, missed rounds, lax record keeping, skipped committee meetings);
- Nonavailability on call;
- Often late, absent, or ill;
- Poor or inappropriate orders;
- Increasingly irritable with staff and/or colleagues;
- Frequent requests for colleagues to "cover" for him or her;
- Rounding at unusual or inappropriate hours;
- Recent memory problems;
- Over-prescribing of mood-altering drugs/narcotics for patients, self, or family;
- Self-medication for anxiety/depression, narcotics;

7. **Anesthesia-Specific Signs:**
- Unexplained absences;
- Unexplained preference for solo work;
- Refusal to take usual breaks;
- Decline in clinical skill;
- Sloppy record-keeping;
- Change to heavily narcotic-based techniques;
- Public "wastage" of large amounts of narcotic (actually saline);
- Clinical ineffectiveness of narcotics used by relief anesthetist (saline substitution);
  Long sleeves in O.R. (cover bruises/tracks).

Drs. Hennessey & Immerman
Physician Impairment

3 May 1991

SGIM National Meeting