To: Dr. Erika Paterson,

From: Taras Shyp

Date: October 11, 2019

Subject: Formal report proposal for improving mental wellness of graduate students of Interdisciplinary Oncology Program at the BC Cancer Research Center

**Location of the study**

BC Cancer Research Center is a world-known center for cancer-related research and studies. It includes different departments, which are the place for work for a great number of graduate students from all around the world.

**Background of readers.**

This report is directed to Vanessa P., who is the President of GrasPods - the organization for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows at the BC Cancer Research Center. The main goal of the organization is to facilitate scientific and social networks among students, support young scientists well-being during their study. Another person to whom I will provide this report is Kevin B., who is a Co-Director of the Interdisciplinary Oncology Program at the BC Cancer Research Center.

**Introduction**

The BC Cancer Research Center is a world-renowned center for cancer-related researches, which vary from basic molecular and genetic studies to clinical research on cancer prevention. Many students involved in this research by studying in different graduate programs. One of these programs is the Interdisciplinary Oncology Program, which offers advanced studies in fields relating to oncology. Studying at this program provides students with unique academic opportunities. At the same time, for graduate students is hard to manage with demands and study workload of the program, which may cause a negative influence on health well-being, including mental wellness.

**Statement of problem**

Mental wellness is a crucial part of lifelong health and it goes along with physical health. Mental well-being based on healthy eating, good sleeping, social connections, and other factors. Graduate students experience significant challenges in the present academic world, because of high demands , unclear future employing possibilities. The Interdisciplinary Oncology Program provides an intensive study schedule and it causes high requirements from students, who often handle a variety of stressful situations that can detrimentally affect their mental wellness. Moreover, additional interference on mental health creates by new social, cultural environment, as most of the students who join the program are from other countries. Therefore, improving mental wellness and preventing situations that can cause mental well-being challenges, will improve the students` work-productivity and protect them from serious health consequences.

**Proposed Solution**

Improving the mental wellness of graduate students must include various approaches. One possible way may include elucidating the main factors that negatively affect the mental wellness of students at the BC Cancer Research Center and creating recommendation on how to avoid or handle them. Another perspective solution for reducing mental health problems is arranging regular specific workshops and social events (e.g. stress-management lessons), focused on support of students` mental well-being.

**Scope**

To elucidate new methods for improving mental health and wellness next questions must be solved successfully:

1. What are mental health and wellness mean?
2. What are the main factors that negatively affect mental wellness of graduate students?
3. How to decrease the influence of factors that harm students` mental health?
4. How students at the BC Cancer Research Center handle stressful situations?
5. Are graduate students aware of available resources for supporting mental well-being?
6. What resources for supporting mental wellness could be applied at the BC Cancer Research Center?

**Methods**

The primary sources for this research project will be interviewing the coordinators at GrasPod, who involved in mental wellness support. Another source of the information would be providing surveys among graduate students about mental health and well-being.

Secondary sources will be reviewing research articles about mental wellness support at PubMed (an archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature). Also, the analysis of Provincial Health Services Authority resources about mental health and wellness would be a useful source of information for this report.

**My qualifications**

As a graduate student in the Interdisciplinary Oncology Program at the Department of  Molecular Oncology at the BC Cancer Research Center and the member of GradsPods, I am involved in students` daily life and could estimate the problem of mental wellness challenges from inside. Moreover, as a graduate of medical school, I am aware of all components of mental health, factors that may disrupt them, as well as the methods and ways how to support your mental health.

**Conclusion**

It is obvious, that mental wellness has a great impact on person`s health and productivity at work or study. Graduate students at the BC Cancer Research Center, who affiliate with Interdisciplinary Oncology Program oftentimes experience challenges during study, which can cause mental wellness disruption. Providing detailed analysis of students` mental health would help to recognize main triggers for mental wellness and eradicate them to create healthy work and study milieu for young researchers.