

# Intermountain Caregivers Pioneer Mental Health Support Group for Emergency Staff After Losing One of Their Own

*The OASIS program will train nurses and physicians in suicide prevention and will select leaders and peer counselors*

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, USA, March 22, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Doctors, nurses, and caregivers in the Emergency Department at Intermountain Medical Center have created a new mental health peer support system. The OASIS program aims to confront post-traumatic stress disorder type symptoms and other mental trauma caregivers can experience at work. OASIS stands for:

- Outreach education
- Administrative support
- Staff support
- Internal/Incident support
- Social support for all members of our ED family

Adam Balls, MD, chair of the Emergency Department at Intermountain Medical Center, Gary Brunson, RN, assistant nurse manager, and several colleagues developed the OASIS program after a coworker took his own life in March of 2018. Skyler Gardner had worked in the Emergency Department for several years as a critical care tech lead. Dr. Balls said his death came as a shock to everyone.

“Skyler was loved by many and liked by all,” said Dr. Balls. “He had reached out to some people, but they didn’t know what to do.”

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*Adam Balls, MD, chair of the ED at Intermountain Medical Center*

After his death, Skyler’s parents Blake and Wendy started a campaign on suicide prevention called “Love Yourself,” in hopes of getting people the help they need. As a part of the effort they made “Love Yourself” wristbands which ER staff wear and give out to patients in similar situations.

“We’re just overwhelmed to see them getting the word out, and remembering Skyler,” said Wendy. “I really hope telling his story will help others.”



Intermountain Healthcare offers free counseling to all employees through the Employee Assistance Program. Dr. Balls said some caregivers may feel uncomfortable talking with a

stranger not in their department. OASIS trains specific emergency room staff who caregivers can go to for help. It also trains those staff to look for signs of mental stress in others.

"We know people are silently struggling with issues both in and out of work, and we want them to know they don't have to," notes Dr. Balls.

Gary Brunson is the assistant nurse manager of the ED and one of the leaders of the OASIS program. He was good friends with Skyler and didn't suspect something like this would happen.

Part of the Intermountain effort is acknowledging that caregivers see traumatic things as part of their job. The goal, Brunson notes, is for them to realize it's okay to be bothered by it and ask for help in dealing with the impact it has on their mental health.

"We deal with some horrific things - we see things that burn images into our brains that we are just unable to ever really clear," said Brunson. "The stigma is that we are just supposed to deal with it."

Nurse Megan Frausto is also helping lead the effort of the new program. As someone who has struggled with mental health, she hopes telling her story will help others.

"The stigma surrounding mental health sadly still exists today," said Frausto. "I was honored when they asked me to head up this program."

The OASIS program will train nurses and physicians in suicide prevention and will select leaders and peer counselors.

Organizers hope talking about mental health will show others that it's okay not to be okay. Dr. Balls said struggling through tough situations doesn't have to be a part of working in the Emergency Department.

Intermountain Healthcare is a Utah-based not-for-profit system of 23 hospitals, 170 clinics, a Medical Group with some 2,300 employed physicians and advanced care practitioners, a health insurance company called SelectHealth, and other health services. Intermountain is widely recognized as a leader in transforming healthcare through evidence-based best practices, high quality, and sustainable costs. For more information about Intermountain, visit [intermountainhealthcare.org](http://intermountainhealthcare.org).

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