**Self-care is a sign of strength, makes you a better caregiver. Michael Knox, MD, discusses the benefits of CISM**

Michael “Mike” Knox, MD, Past President, Medical Staff, Spectrum Health Grand Rapids, is one of several physicians who have trained to be a facilitator on Spectrum Health’s [Critical Incident Stress Management](https://community.spectrumhealth.org/groups/critical-incident-stress-management-cism) team. Below, Mike shares his experience participating in a CISM debriefing—not as a facilitator, but as a care team member who needed emotional first aid after a critical incident.

**Why did you attend the CISM?**

I attended with a dual purpose.  Having trained as a CISM facilitator, I wanted to learn about it and be able to speak to colleagues as to what it is like receiving the support.  What prompted me even more to attend was that I experienced a personal sense of loss in this patient’s passing as I had been pretty involved in his care. I had a strong sense of empathy for the patient and his family and wanted to bring this loss to closure for me personally.  All of his care team knew that he did not have a correctable problem, and we knew that it would not end well.  I think we all grieve when that happens to someone with whom we have a personal connection, and there is no way to prepare for that grief before it happens.

 

**In what ways did attending the CISM assist you in emotionally processing the incident?**

Some of the work I’ve done with the Physician Wellness committee and reading has helped me to get in touch with my feelings when things do not go well. The CISM debriefing was a way of bringing it to the forefront and experiencing it in real time, instead of just talking about it and reading about it.  It was good to express those feelings.  Everything expressed was welcomed, received without judgement, and validated.

**Why would you recommend CISM to other Physicians and/or Spectrum staff who have experienced a critical incident?**

I think this is something that helps us confront and acknowledge the feelings that we have when abnormally stressful events happen. I think it makes us better people and better caregivers to acknowledge that we are humans, and the people we care for are human, and to have that human interaction. To talk through some of those things makes us better caregivers. When we accept our humanity and emotions, patients and colleagues are going to respond better to us.  It is part of healthcare and healing to foster wellbeing in each of us so we can have better interpersonal interactions with our patients.

**What would you say to someone hesitant to utilize CISM for themselves or for their team?**

We may be conditioned to feel it is a sign of weakness to do something like this.  When in reality, it is a sign of strength that with self-care we can be better caregivers.  I would encourage everyone to be open to the idea that self-care is something that can help make each of us a better caregiver.

**Any Spectrum Health employee at any location can request CISM care for themselves or their department/unit 24/7 by using** [**PerfectServe**](https://community.spectrumhealth.org/docs/DOC-135954) **(click here for instructions) or by calling 616.391.1753.**

For more information about CISM, refer to the [FAQs](https://community.spectrumhealth.org/docs/DOC-27620?sr=stream&ru=8267) or contact one of the CISM coordinators: [Phil Wiechart](https://community.spectrumhealth.org/people/phi11138), [Joanna Bailey](https://community.spectrumhealth.org/people/bailjm) or [Than Johnson](https://community.spectrumhealth.org/people/nat03459)

