



College of Intensive Care Medicine
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WHAT IS A 'WELFARE ADVOCATE' AND WHAT COULD THEY BRING TO MY UNIT?

The College has just released professional document [IC-31 Guidelines on the Welfare Advocate Role in Intensive Care Units](#). This may well have you asking yourself “what is a Welfare Advocate, anyway?”, or perhaps “what can a Welfare Advocate add to my intensive care unit?”. If so, then read on!

In recent years, an increasing awareness of, and focus on, wellbeing, welfare and resilience within the specialty of Intensive Care Medicine has developed. The College of Intensive Care Medicine has supported and encouraged the formation of the Welfare Special Interest Group, and has supported wellbeing and welfare initiatives such as the provision of a member assistance program, and the regular welfare SIG updates in the CICM newsletter. The concept of a Welfare Advocate role within intensive care departments has developed over time, and is suggested as another potential tool and resource for the promotion and maintenance of CICM members' wellbeing and welfare.

What does a Welfare Advocate do?

A Welfare Advocate is a person who acts as a resource, a promotor and a supporter of welfare and wellbeing within a unit. That is, they are the “go-to” person for welfare issues and questions and promotion. A Welfare Advocate is aware of, and up to date with, available local, regional and national resources for mental and physical health, welfare and welfare issues, and is able to provide this information for their trainees and colleagues.

A Welfare Advocate will also look out for, remain aware of, and promote, welfare activities and strategies. A Welfare Advocate will be as much about promoting health, wellbeing and resilience as they are about being available for welfare issues and concerns. A Welfare Advocate is approachable, motivated and caring, has good communication skills and is able to have open, honest conversations. At all times they will be able to provide a safe, non-judgemental and confidential approach to their colleagues and trainees.

Importantly, a Welfare Advocate does not provide or enter into, any kind of therapeutic role – they are *not* a counsellor, nor a therapist.

Who can be a Welfare Advocate?

A Welfare Advocate is a motivated, interested, and willing specialist practising in Intensive Care Medicine within a unit, or within an area or region (units in a region may wish to share a Welfare Advocate). The specialist may or may not be a Fellow of the College of Intensive Care Medicine – what is important is that they have the attributes required for the role, and the motivation to undertake the role. Perhaps this sounds like you? Why not have a talk with the other specialists in the unit and volunteer for the role? Resources are available on the CICM website to help with the role and for those interested in learning more (including IC-31 and the Welfare SIG resource page).