



July 18, 2017

Dear USC community,

I am writing to you today to address the article that appeared in the July 17 *Los Angeles Times* concerning Dr. Carmen Puliafito, who left his position as dean of the Keck School of Medicine in March 2016. I know that many of us in the USC community were distressed and disturbed by the assertions. Our university categorically condemns the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of drugs.

We are concerned about Dr. Puliafito and his family and hope that, if the article's assertions are true, he receives the help and treatment he may need for a full recovery. He is on leave from our school of medicine, and is not seeing patients.

Unfortunately, the issue of substance abuse is not uncommon and impacts individuals at all levels of society. Reports of high-powered executives, doctors, and others with substance abuse issues have become all too common—individuals who function in their workplace but have serious issues affecting their private lives. We understand the frustrations expressed about this situation, and we want to assure our community that we are taking all of the proper steps to examine and address it. More broadly, we are working to determine how we can best prevent these kinds of circumstances moving forward.

This specific issue is, of course, complicated by privacy rights, but we can state that we will do what is right and best for our entire campus community and our mission. We continue on the path to improve our support system. In the spring, we announced a new Office of Campus Wellness and Crisis Intervention, with a full team of professionals providing assistance to better address university wellness, threat assessment, and crisis response.

And the medical school has a peer-to-peer program, in conjunction with Vanderbilt University, that is designed to specifically offer resources to physicians who need support or show signs of distress.

Our new dean of the medical school, Rohit Varma, who has been with us for the last 16 months, shares the view that we must be more aware of signs of distress in ourselves and in others, and be willing to raise our concerns. We are proud of how Dr. Varma and our faculty, staff, and students are successfully moving our medical school forward. Our mission of teaching, research, and patient care is best served when we care for ourselves and others with whom we work.

Sincerely,

C. L. Max Nikias
President