

## ***Virtual Mentor***

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### **CASE AND COMMENTARY**

#### **If a Colleague is Impaired**

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#### **Case**

Tom and Jack have been friends since the start of medical school, and are about to start their third-year rotations. Tom considers himself a social drinker, but he noticed that Jack has been drinking more and more over the last year. Tom was not concerned about this during the 2 years of basic science training, but now that Jack will start seeing patients on a more regular basis, he has become worried. He wants to get some help, but does not want to strain his friendship.

#### **Question for Discussion**

What should Tom do?

AMA Code of Medical Ethics Opinion E-8.15 on substance abuse, E-9.031 on reporting impaired, incompetent or unethical colleagues, and E-9.04 on discipline and medicine, as well as AMSA principles regarding physician impairment and substance use, all speak to the issues facing Tom. Are these opinions and principles helpful in your decision-making regarding this case? Why or why not?

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