

Mental Health Support for Doctors



Reading time:
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Beware of these warning signs...

- Self prescribing and inappropriate use of medications
- Practitioners with established mental health conditions
- Poor performance or assessment
- Being bullied or harassed (however, appropriate performance management is not bullying or harassment)
- Regular disputes with your colleagues
- International healthcare graduates facing isolation, prejudice or cultural and communication issues

Key messages

- Many bad behaviours and co morbidities begin whilst at medical school
- Prevalence of psychiatric morbidity is 26% in final medical school year and increases during internship
- Psychiatric morbidity, substance abuse and relationship problems are common for health practitioners
- Surveys reveal a higher depression rate than the general population, 10% of practitioners had suicidal ideations
- Many doctors' do not look after themselves – 40% do not have a GP, 50% write their own prescriptions and 30% have not seen a doctors for years
- AHPRA has a number of reporting requirements surrounding impairment. These include self-reporting and mandatory reporting. The implications can be serious. Self-reporting impairment may minimise the consequences

Strategies

- Never prescribe S8 drugs for yourself or family, see your GP. Always properly record and dispose of drugs
- Develop a healthy work life balance – do not overdo either
- Contact your medical defence organisation (MDOs) early with any issues – note MDO advisers (eg MIPS clinico-legal adviser) are exempt from mandatory reporting to AHPRA
- Show insight – reach out and seek out help, support and assistance. This is not a weakness and you will not be stigmatised. Get help from your GP, employee assistance programs, beyondblue Mental Health Program for doctors, your state based doctors help program and your MDO.
- Supervision and dealing with bullying are both skills that need to be taught and learnt

When in doubt

Contact MIPS' [24 hour Clinico-Legal Support](#).

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