

# The Impact of Workplace Stress on Medical Interns

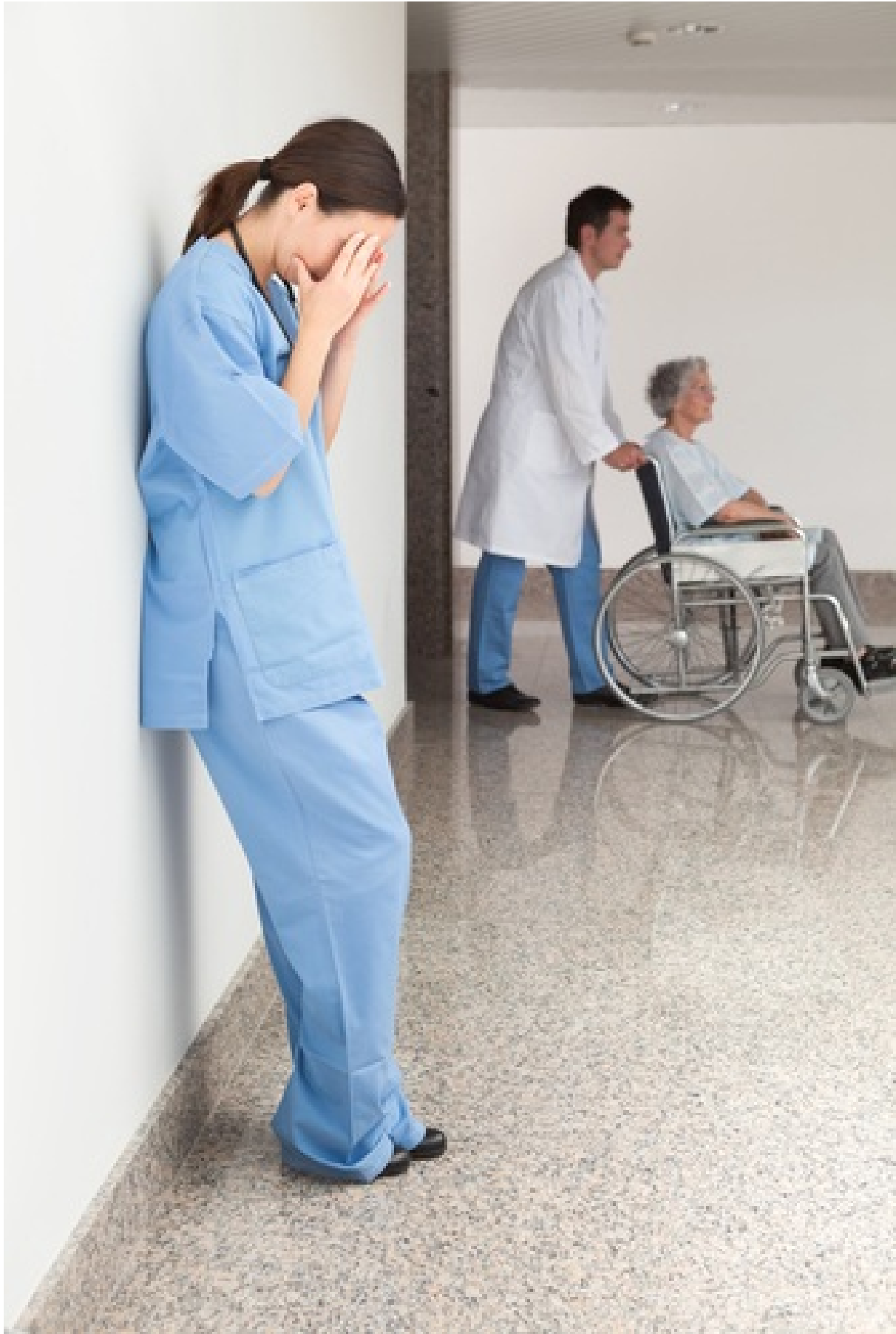


Reading time:

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Dr M, an intern, was faced with increasingly onerous and stressful workplace obligations. He had become progressively so worried and concerned about workload and fatigue that he raised his concerns with hospital administration.



No immediate changes were implemented or intended. A few weeks later he raised his concerns again. On the second occasion the hospital advised that it was normal practice for a junior doctor to cover such surgical teams during idle periods and that in fact,

it would be like working on a weekend.

Several days later Dr M took his life.

The hospital investigation into the circumstances revealed Dr M had slightly higher unrostered overtime hours compared to his peers but he did not deal with an excessive number of patients.

No doubt there were factors of personal/mental health that were a contributing cause, however the young doctor's workload, fatigue and obvious distress about his work environment was a major contributing factor in his death.

Beyond Blue research findings on mental health issues showed suicide and depression are more prevalent among both men and women in the medical profession than in the general public. Research found that the highly competitive and perfectionist nature of the profession were factors and that doctors felt that being depressed themselves was a sign of weakness.

Young health practitioners need to be alert to such situations and seek assistance particularly if they are international medical graduates or are socially or physically isolated in a remote area. Health practitioners should always seek help beyond their immediate employer or practice. Support groups are available (AMA, bodies including medical defence organisations and various agencies such as Beyond Blue).

AHPRA's Code of Conduct refer to the requirement to ensure practitioner health. Please refer to:

#### 11. Ensuring practitioner's health

##### 11.1 Introduction

##### 11.2 Your health and;

##### 11.3 Other practitioner's Health

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