

DOCTORS' HEALTH IN QUEENSLAND NEW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Doctors' Health in Queensland welcomes their new Medical Director Dr Jennifer Schafer. Dr Schafer's clinical career spans almost 40 years, including more than 30 years as a general practitioner, as well as roles in medical education (UQ Faculty of Medicine), clinical research (Wesley Medical Research), and medical reporting (Channel 9). Dr Schafer continues to serve as Patron of the University of Queensland Medical Society. Dr Schafer also has a special interest in leadership and management, emerging from post-graduate study at UQ and QUT Business Schools, and experience working as the Academic Lead for the UQ Medical Leadership Program. She is currently Deputy Chair of the Board for Brisbane North Primary Health Network, and is a member of the Governance Committee. She has been a Director on the Board of Arthritis Queensland since 2016, and serves as Chair of the Community Advisory Group.

Dr Schafer is looking forward to contributing to the health and wellbeing of Queensland's doctors and medical students.



DR JENNIFER SCHAFER
Medical Director,
Doctors' Health in Queensland

SUPPORTING OUR TRAINEES

Doctors' Health in Queensland receives about a third of its calls from junior doctors. While not all of them are officially 'trainees', they are doctors who are on their journey towards their specialisation.

Therefore, as President of Doctors' Health in Queensland, I was extremely interested to read this paper: *Factors impacting health and well being and the utilisation of supports among Australian doctors in medical specialty training*; Abhary S, Botti M, Dhulia A, et al. *BMJ Leader* 2021;5:26–30.

I would like to highlight the findings of this paper as it resonated with me.

This paper reports the findings of the first qualitative study in Australia to explore factors impacting the health and wellbeing of doctors in various specialty training programs.

Common themes impacting health and wellbeing regarding workplace and training stressors were identified, including poor supervision, shift work and on-call, inability to take sick leave, bullying and harassment, college-related factors, examination preparation and work-life imbalance. Several of these were identified as having actual and perceived negative impacts on patient outcomes and safety.

Despite available systems for support (eg. doctors' health programmes and employee assistance programs), there is evidence that they are heavily underused and that doctors are not comfortable using some services, especially if they feel their privacy is at risk. Those available via the hospital were the least used because of concerns with confidentiality and how access to support may impact their workplace relationships, job security and training.



DR ANNE ULCOQ
President, Doctors'
Health in Queensland



Accessibility of consultants to support registrars was a dominant theme related to supervision. Accessibility included elements of being supportive, understanding, available and approachable when advice was needed and willingness to provide teaching. Experiences of poor accessibility of consultants left the trainees to endure high workloads unsupported, some felt bullied, harassed or humiliated in front of others with little feedback in order to improve.

The impact of high workloads and reluctance to take sick leave were perceived by many participants to adversely affect their ability to provide optimal patient care.

This paper came up with multi-system strategies, that are required to address complex issues identified as affecting the health and wellbeing of junior doctors and therefore, optimal health care delivery and patient outcomes. These strategies were divided into national strategies and hospital and college strategies. They are a combination of direct recommendations as a result of the findings of this study or devised from the literature and the authors' collective knowledge of the health sector and medical workforce management experience in Australia.



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