

DOCTORS' HEALTH IN QUEENSLAND INAUGURAL ANNUAL WELLNESS DAY

Doctors' Health in Queensland (DHQ) celebrated *Mental Health Week* by holding our inaugural annual *Wellness Day* on 9 October at Walkabout Creek, The Gap. The *Wellness Day* was created to nurture our doctors who generously volunteer their time to care for their colleagues. DHQ's helpline panel is a group of experienced and dedicated general practitioners who provide advice via the 24/7 confidential helpline for Queensland's doctors and medical students. The panel and guests, all with an interest in doctors' health, were invited to join us for a combination of relaxation and education, while enjoying the natural environment of Walkabout Creek.

A range of doctors' health issues were discussed. Dr Lydia Pitcher spoke about doctors' health from a holistic perspective, with a particular focus on physical and nutritional aspects of health. Physicians need to be both physically and mentally healthy to be able to provide optimum care for patients. Doctors are human, vulnerable and typically very busy, often resulting in reduced self-care and health surveillance. She recommended having your own GP, regular review (not just in a crisis), and 'keeping your fuel tank full'.

Dr Ira van der Steenstraten's engaging and entertaining presentation highlighted the benefits of mindfulness as self-care, helping doctors to stay healthy and energised, while enabling them to cope with the inevitable stressors in the health care system. Ira led a two-minute meditation, demonstrating how brief but regular sessions of mindfulness can be incorporated into a busy schedule.

Dr Emily Shao addressed some of the challenges facing junior doctors, as well as barriers to seeking help. Stressors include prolonged pathways to access vocational training positions, creating uncertainty of employment and financial stress. Doctors in training are required to study for exams in parallel with working long hours. As young adults, many are also simultaneously juggling careers, partners, children and mortgages. Challenges can be exacerbated by difficult working conditions, further increasing the risk of burnout. She emphasised the need for awareness of the issues, advocacy and a call to action, particularly regarding employment contracts and more effective management of bullying in the workplace.

Dr Warren Ward spoke about the escalating prevalence of eating disorders, with anorexia nervosa having the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Personality factors that increase the risk of anorexia, including perfectionism, conscientiousness and the ability to defer gratification, which are common in doctors. Dieting is the major risk factor, triggering 'starvation syndrome' which causes profound changes to thinking, feelings and behavior.

Other sessions included an update on mandatory reporting, referral pathways for acute psychiatric illness, a review of the helpline experience, and case management discussions.

But it was not all work! Zara from Brisbane Yoga Space led a gentle 30-minute session of 'Chair Yoga', leaving us all feeling calm, relaxed and with much better posture. Bushwalking was encouraged over the lunch break so that attendees could connect and share experiences with colleagues.



DR JENNIFER SCHAFER
Medical Director, Doctors'
Health in Queensland



NAOMI NEWTON
Program Manager, Doctors'
Health in Queensland



The weather was perfect and Walkabout Creek provided an exquisite environment for our guests to enjoy the exercise and increase their step count.

Thank you to our generous sponsors, RACGP and MIPS, who made this day possible. A special thank you goes to all the wonderful organisers and speakers who contributed their time to create a fantastic day focused on doctors' wellness. The resoundingly positive feedback encouraged us to schedule the Wellness Day as an annual event. We look forward to seeing you all again in 2022.



Doctors' Health in Queensland (DHQ) provides an independent, confidential, colleague to colleague support service for Queensland doctors and medical students.