Those working within the health care sector, including doctors and medical students, report higher rates of psychological distress than other professions. Although low, research has found that doctors have higher rates of suicidal thoughts than the general population and other professions (Beyond Blue, 2019). Psychiatry has the added stressors of frequent exposure to distressing emotions and human suffering.

Acknowledging that occasionally things are tough or that you are struggling can be difficult. One of the biggest barriers for doctors accessing support services is the perceived stigma associated with ‘stress’ or ‘mental illness’.

It’s OK to struggle, but it’s NOT OK to suffer in silence.

Learn to recognize signs of stress, depression, and burnout in yourself. Reach out to colleagues for assistance and support. Sharing your experiences with colleagues may help others in similar situations. Additionally, the support of colleagues can be a great source of comfort during difficult times.’

Brooks 2019

Promote self-care activities

It’s time to book in that holiday you’ve been thinking about, or take a day off to spend time with loved ones. Prioritise those activities that help you relax.

Manage your time effectively

Ensure you schedule time for admin and learning during the day and delegate paperwork to practice staff where possible. Always aim to leave work on time.

Become self aware

Practicing some form of spirituality, mindfulness or meditation can help you become aware of your stressors and coping styles, and work towards a positive frame of mind and improve your mental resilience.

Clode & Boldero 2005
Keeping Yourself Well
For more support and information visit ranzcp.org/support

Self care

Self care is simply any action you make to take care of your physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health. It is unique for everyone and what works for you may not work for others.

PSYCHOLOGICAL
- learn something new
- counselling
- mindfulness
- turn off all technology for an afternoon
- make time for your hobbies outside of work.

SPIRITUAL
- reflect on your work
- prayer
- meditation
- forgiveness
- find meaning and purpose.

EMOTIONAL
- positive self-talk
- laughter
- express how you feel.

PHYSICAL
- nutrition
- sleep
- exercise
- routine health contacts
- utilise sick leave
- reduce alcohol intake.

WORKPLACE
- take regular breaks
- peer support
- supervision
- negotiate time off
- employee assistance program
- human resources
- get involved.

RELATIONSHIPS
- spend time on meaningful relationships
- schedule a date night
- connect with friends on social media
- ask for support from friends and peers.
A good GP will get to know you as a person and be able to take a holistic approach to your health needs. It’s not only important to have your own GP, it is also important to have a GP with whom you feel comfortable enough to share some of your innermost thoughts and anxieties. Sometimes this means moving on from the family GP that you’ve grown up with.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT GP FOR YOU

Choosing your GP can be a very personal decision and we all tend to look for different qualities or a have preference for a certain style.

Look for a GP who:

• is comfortable treating members of the medical profession
• appreciates that it’s hard making the transition from care giver to care receiver
• allocates additional consulting time when necessary
• treats you like a patient and not a colleague (for example, arranges your follow up and explains things as if you have no prior knowledge).

Finding a GP that suits you is a personal choice and you may need to try several GPs before you find the one that suits you.

There are a growing number of GPs who have a keen interest in helping their colleagues and who have undergone specific training to be GPs for other doctors. Doctors health advisory services can refer you to GPs who have a specific interest in this area. The contact numbers for the doctors health advisory services along with other useful services are available at ranzcp.org/support.

The College’s Find a Psychiatrist service can also help you find a psychiatrist that is comfortable treating colleagues. Under ‘Has experience with’, select ‘Doctors, psychiatrists or medical students’.

CONFIDENTIALITY WITH YOUR GP

The confidentiality of consultations with your GP is a given. Nothing you say or do should be disclosed to a third party unless:

1. You want it to be.

2. Your doctor is obliged to report under mandatory reporting laws. They are set out in the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) website or the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) website.

Feeling stressed, depressed or having a mental illness are certainly not in themselves grounds for mandatory reporting.

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