



## Tipping the scales back towards balance – mental health, social media and Crazysocks4docs

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Healthcare work across WA hasn't been getting any easier. While the rest of the State gleefully throw their masks away, doctors are still embracing their N95-induced acne. Whilst travel restrictions are relaxing, access to leave from the workplace is still very limited.

We don't enter the medical profession for a laid-back career path, or with a casual attitude towards the workplace. But often, we don't yet know the full magnitude of the role's stressors until we enter it. It's only when we begin our internships that we find out being a good junior doctor is almost synonymous with becoming burnt out.

We take on the responsibility of the healthcare profession with earnest intention for the good of the patients. But sometimes, we feel like we're expected to give more of ourselves than we had bargained for.

To tip the scales back, we try to find the elusive work-life balance and reconnect with the meaning in our work. One incredibly important joy is the camaraderie and support we can provide each other.

This 'all-in-this-together' mantra connects us as humans. The knowing looks between difficult patients; the debriefings in common rooms after a tough day; the morning coffee run shared between colleagues – all of these brighten our days and help diffuse the load of our difficult job. As the proverbial saying states, "A problem shared is a problem halved". Despite this, doctors have historically been unwilling to express, discuss or acknowledge mental health issues within the profession.

Mental health distress is present, palpable, but often overlooked and repressed. Stigma around mental health and illness is dangerous, and it undermines the safety and integrity of a workplace. It is this evil that dictates we be robotic and unmoving, whilst simultaneously being empathetic and kind to our patients. It is a stigma that tells us to be kind to others before being kind to ourselves.

But there's a new generation hoping to change this. How we view mental health today is vastly different to how we viewed it 10 years ago.

One way this generation is communicating their interest in a mentally safe and balanced workplace is through social media. It enables us to reach out to a time-poor and outspread community, and share support amongst busy peers.

Social media also allows us to bridge the gap between peer groups and generational groups which may be more obvious in real life.

As Marketing Officer for the Doctors' Health Advisory Service of Western Australia (DHASWA), my job is to use social media to reach WA doctors and medical students, and to help spread the message of destigmatising doctors' mental health, and services available to help doctors stay healthy.

During our recent #Crazysocks4docs (CS4D) day competition held on Friday 3 June, we

asked participants to send us their crazy socks photos in support of healthcare workers' mental health. We received 75 photo entries across WA, from medical students to board executives. The social media campaign helped us reach 8,953 people through Facebook and 1,890 people through Instagram – numbers we would not have achieved without social media.

The CS4D campaign demonstrates what an important and effective tool social media is for reaching the medical community en masse. It allows us to convey to busy medical professionals our local health services and resources, and gives individuals a platform to advocate for doctors' health. ■

“ **Support your peers and help us destigmatise mental health in doctors by spreading the message of 'Awareness, Advocacy and Action' in mental health.** ”

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