

WELLBEING WARNING

REDUCE YOUR RISK!

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As an intern, you're in a high-risk group for burnout, psychological stress, anxiety and depression. You're now an essential part of the health system and it's a professional obligation to manage your wellbeing – for yourselves, hospital colleagues and patients.

Your personal health

It's crucial for all involved that you don't work while unwell. Be prepared for situations like COVID-19 by knowing how to use personal protective equipment and have a plan for staying at home if you become unwell. Prioritise eating, sleeping and exercise in your routine. Have your own GP and see them yearly for a preventive check.

Your self-care plan

Envisage a 'wellbeing' bucket with a hole in the bottom (medical practice) – you need to be constantly filling it up to avoid burnout. Your self-care requires planning and prioritisation to be effective and sustainable. You're not expected to know everything – so if you don't know, just ask. Don't work for free as this undermines your self-worth and your income. Try to leave work concerns at the hospital with your handover before going home. Don't miss out on taking rest and meal breaks so you can function efficiently and reduce stress. Try to take leave when you're permitted, even if it's just a weekend away.

Revitalising activities

What makes you tick OUTSIDE of medicine? It's different for everyone – family, friends, hobbies, spirituality, volunteering, research or further education. Prioritise and schedule these into your routine. Nurture relationships outside of medicine as these keep you grounded in the real world.

Self-monitoring

Insight is key – you need to monitor yourself for 'early warning signs' of wellbeing challenges. Burnout is classically manifested in three ways – feelings of exhaustion, empathy drain and low professional output. Anxiety and depression can also have subtle features. Monitor yourself (and colleagues), connect with your internal resources and reach out for support early.

Having difficulties?

- We advocate your GP as the first port of call.
- Talking with colleagues can be useful, and several hospitals have formalised peer-support programs.
- Most hospitals have visible welfare officers and offer independent Employee Assist Programs for confidential counselling options.
- The national doctors' health body, DRS4DRS, offers a free telemedicine counselling service: drs4drs.com.au/getting-help.
- At Doctors' Health Advisory Service WA, we offer a confidential anonymous advice line (08 9321 3098; 24/7) staffed by experienced GPs and psychiatrists to offer early triage and support. We've also collated a 'Doctors for Doctors' list comprised of GPs, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who have an interest in doctors' health and are willing to prioritise appointments for doctor (and medical student) patients: dhaswa.com.au.

This may seem all doom and gloom, but it isn't. A medical career can be so rewarding. We just have to make sure we look after ourselves to prepare for the long run.



Using the mindfulness principles of 'intentional presence' with your daily tasks can prevent the stress and inefficiency associated with multitasking. Be mindful of others and show 'kindfulness' – gratitude, kindness and respect for the whole team. Remember, this includes self-compassion.

