



Embracing your new 'home' as an IMG

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After graduating from Lady Hardinge Medical College and completing my internship in New Delhi, India, I relocated to Australia in April 2018 with my parents. My father was working in Western Australia's mining industry at the time.

My sole focus over those first couple of years was passing the AMC exams to be able to commence working in the healthcare system here. On successfully achieving those milestones, I was able to reflect on my experience with the process, and noticed the lack of support or guidance for international medical graduates (IMGs) – be it navigating through the AMC pathways, applying for employment, appearing for interviews, registration requirements with AHPRA, adjusting to the new workplace culture and technology, understanding out-of-work community culture, and a myriad of things that come with settling in a new place.

To be able to address IMG-specific issues, a few of us got together on a Messenger group to create a safe space to ask questions and discuss workplace incidents, as well as seek guidance from veteran IMGs in Perth or local graduates willing to lend a helping hand or even a listening ear. This group of doctors slowly grew in number, and we soon had enough members to form Buddy IMGs, who could help guide fresh-off-the-boat doctors. We would also meet up monthly for informal catch-ups.

As a group, we were flourishing, addressing short-term issues being faced at workplaces, and dealing with problems regarding registration or visas. Yet personally, I felt a bit lost, unable to put my finger on the reason for my constantly restless state of mind.

For me, a sense of belonging is



essential to workplace satisfaction, and despite enjoying the work itself in that first year, I was unable to identify the reason behind my ongoing dissatisfaction. Workplace mentors, seniors and colleagues were usually very forthcoming and approachable. Yet, there was a sense of isolation – sometimes self-imposed, at others, situationally fostered.

An IMG is at daily risk of an invisible battle with this feeling of isolation, which could trigger a strong sense of alienation in the subconscious mind. Besides unfamiliarity with the processes of a new workplace, the psychological impact of isolation can decrease self-confidence and affect efficacy, while reducing the quality of life in general. Even though the Messenger group consisting of peers was a great tool to address many issues, I felt the need for

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more senior guidance and therefore developed a meet-and-greet with consultants called CHAT & CHAI (Come Hear and Talk, Consultants Hear All IMGs). This term-ly tea-time allows junior IMGs to interact with consultant IMGs across various specialties, and learn about their journeys and challenges faced while navigating through training pathways. It also offers opportunity to gain insight into their personal struggles as an immigrant, and how they dealt with these hurdles.

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SMOKE ALARM

Perth schools like Aquinas College and Presbyterian Ladies' College are installing high-tech sensors to catch out vaping students, according to a Nine News investigation.



The investigation reported that disposable e-cigarettes were being sold illegally to children, getting them hooked on nicotine.

"There is just a smell of vape all the time," one Geelong Catholic school student said of her experience.

Puff bars or disposable vapes come in bright colours, appealing to children with fruity and dessert flavours, the report continued.

"We really see this as despicable marketing," AMA (WA) President Dr Mark Duncan-Smith told the reporter.

While touted as a healthy option for adults who want to quit smoking, children are purchasing products labelled as nicotine-free, but some are actually laced with a highly addictive substance.

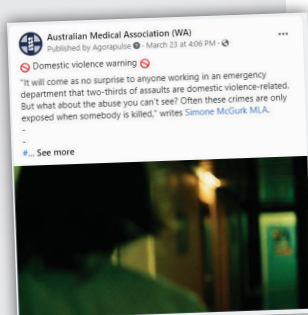
"There are carcinogens, and even bizarre chemicals such as anti-freeze. They get what is called acute pneumonitis, which is a severe inflammation of the lungs, and they basically die of respiratory failure," Dr Duncan-Smith said, adding some advice for those in positions of influence.

"Educate kids about the dangers of vaping, the gateway effect into smoking, and the long-term effects on their health." ■

Nine News, 28 March

SOCIAL MEDIA

This past month, three issues generated much interest across the AMA (WA)'s social media channels. A post about MEDCON22's mega early bird prize generated 451 clicks and reaching more than 2,600 people. And two separate posts on Family Domestic Violence (FDV) and Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) reached more than 1,700 people. ■



At one such meeting, a consultant mentioned how he had changed his mindset from thinking "back home" to "I am home". This marked a huge turning point for me; I identified that my mind was stuck in a space-time conundrum, wherein Delhi was home. My references to Delhi inadvertently always included the phrase "back home", something I realised had become a barrier to accepting that I now belonged in Perth.

Then one afternoon in late November last year, as I wandered into work via the main entrance, busy in my own thoughts, an angel disguised as a volunteer cheerfully greeted me with a loud "Welcome home". With that single chance greeting, I finally felt I was home. ■

My fellow IMGs...

Here are a few tips on coping with the stresses that come along with working and living in a new place:

- Always ask for help; there is no stupid question.
- Have your personal support person or group.
- You are more than welcome to join our support group.
- Go back to your hobbies if you have lost them along the way, or foster a new one.
- Ask a friend if they are OK.
- Speak up if something doesn't feel good – be it to your personal circle, your work team, or hospital medical education.
- Take care of yourself; have your own GP, check out the Drs for Drs service offered by DHASWA.
- This too (whatever phase of your journey it is) shall pass.
- You are doing great – be your own cheerleader.
- And finally, identify your home – and anchor yourself – be it a place, person or just within yourself.

Please contact Dr Ashwita Siri Vanga with any queries or if you'd like to join the Messenger group via vangaasiri@gmail.com

24/7 DHASWA Advice Line – (08) 9321 3098.