

Fact Sheet: Medical Student Wellbeing

what is wellbeing?

The wellbeing of medical students and doctors alike is becoming an increasingly recognised issue. Wellbeing is about managing your mental, physical, emotional and financial health to ensure you have a balanced lifestyle, enjoy what you do, and set yourself up for a long and rewarding career.

are we really that different?

Stress, distress and mental health concerns have often been thought of as a normal part of what can be a demanding and tiring education. However, research studies have shown that, while medical students start their course with a similar psychological wellbeing to others, during the course these levels decline.^[1-4] One study has suggested that almost a quarter of medical students show signs of depression and of them, a quarter will experience an episode of suicidal ideation.^[5]

Other studies had more conservative estimates, but they still show we have rates of depression and stress above the general population. One of the most concerning statistics came from research conducted by AMSA and the NZMSA.^[6] It showed that 55% of medical students believe there is a stigma with experiencing stress and distress, which can create a significant barrier for accessing services and help.

Only 70% of respondents had a regular GP and this figure fell to 44% for international students.

what is being done?

In recent years, AMSA has been working hard to raise the profile of wellbeing and to run a number of meaningful initiatives.

- A comprehensive Wellbeing Policy was enacted by the AMSA Council in March 2010.
- AMSA's Get-A-GP Campaign has helped encourage students to have their own regular GP, as well as offering a list of GPs willing to bulk-bill medical students in their local area.
- The Healthy Body, Healthy Mind Campaign encourages medical students to develop and run their own wellbeing activities.
- At our National Convention, we often run wellbeing workshops, as well as promote student wellbeing through AMSAtv, publications and podcasts.
- AMSA partners with a number of other organisations also dedicated to improving medical student and doctor wellbeing, including the AMA and beyondblue.
- At a local level, AMSA advocates for universities to provide sufficient counselling and support services for students.

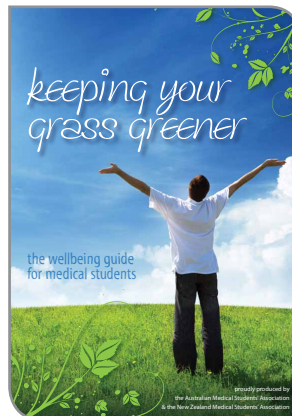
All of these resources can be accessed at www.amsa.org.au/wellbeing

keeping your grass greener

In 2011, AMSA and the NZMSA produced **Keeping your Grass Greener: the wellbeing guide for medical students**.

This guide is available online at www.amsa.org.au/keepingyourgrassgreener and will be printed and distributed to medical schools throughout Australia and New Zealand.

This booklet is designed to help breakdown the stigma that surrounds wellbeing and to provide some practical tips for surviving and thriving at medical school. Also included is a directory that lists helpful places or services you can access when you need some advice.



how can i get involved?

- Take an active interest in the wellbeing of yourself and those around you.
- Get yourself a GP and see them regularly.
- Seek out the person responsible for wellbeing within your medical student society or your local AMSA representative and get involved in wellbeing at a local level.
- Get yourself a copy of Keeping Your Grass Greener.
- Check out the wellbeing page at www.amsa.org.au to keep up with the latest on AMSA's wellbeing front.

References

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