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**DOCTORS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS HAVE HEALTH ISSUES TOO**  
*AMA Position Statement on the Health and Wellbeing of Doctors and Medical Students*

The AMA today released its revised *Position Statement on the Health and Wellbeing of Doctors and Medical Students*.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said that the health and welfare of doctors and medical students is an absolute priority for the AMA.

Dr Bartone said that the AMA has for many years provided leadership for the medical profession to collaboratively advance the processes that will enhance the physical and mental health of doctors and medical students, and improve the health and wellbeing of the entire profession.

“Doctors and medical students face a range of pressures and stressors over the course of their training and career, and it is vital that we address these issues on an individual level and as a profession – across the profession,” Dr Bartone said.

“The day-to-day pressures of being a doctor have touched us all, directly or indirectly, and they can have a profound and unfortunately tragic impact on either our own careers or the careers of our colleagues.

“Sadly, there are still some instances in medical workplace culture that permit bullying and harassment and perpetuate the fear of reprisal.

“The 2019 Medical Training Survey revealed that one in three trainees reported they had witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment. This is totally unacceptable, and must be eliminated from the workplace.”

The revised and updated *Position Statement on the Health and Wellbeing of Doctors and Medical Students 2020* identifies the actions that doctors can take at many levels to support the profession to promote good mental health and physical health, and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle for doctors throughout their medical training and medical careers.

“It is vital we make sure appropriate support and resources are in place to help doctors and medical students with their own health,” Dr Bartone said.

“We must build on the great work that is already occurring. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in times of crisis like COVID-19.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges for doctors to maintain their own psychosocial wellbeing while responding to the pandemic and its effect on the health of the broader community.”

The revised *Position Statement* emphasises that consideration needs to be given to the level of work, stress, difficult clinical treatment decisions, and large numbers of ill patients that may impact the wellbeing of all frontline healthcare workers during the coronavirus crisis.

“Clear, consistent, and timely communication and messaging from health authorities and employers to all healthcare workers should be a priority during this time to maintain wellbeing

and reduce anxiety from misinformation. This will maintain a motivated and safe workforce during this period.

“It is important that doctors look out for the health of their colleagues during this difficult and stressful time.”

The AMA’s subsidiary company, Doctors’ Health Services Pty Ltd (DrHS), funds a network of independent doctors’ health advisory services around the country that provide triage and referral services, and education and other support.

These are delivered with the support of the Medical Board of Australia. More information is available at [www.drs4drs.com.au](http://www.drs4drs.com.au)

More recently, Department of Health funding has facilitated the launch of a new DrHS telehealth service for doctors and medical students who are struggling with their mental health. To access this service, doctors and medical students can call 1300 374 377 (1300 DR4 DRS)

## **Background**

Since the AMA first developed this Position Statement in 2011, much has happened to inform the revised statement. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Competition for vocational training positions, employment post training, and CV buffing.
- A focus on bullying and harassment.
- Increased recognition of burnout and doctor suicide.
- A need for better postvention and return to work strategies.
- An emphasis on providing flexible work and training environments.
- Equal access to leave for all doctors (including parental and domestic violence leave).
- Gender and cultural diversity and awareness.

This Position Statement addresses both the structural and individual barriers to health and wellbeing, and acknowledges that physical and mental health are interrelated. This supports the WHO definition of health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing’.

Dr Bartone said that the AMA has been working with a range of stakeholders to develop the National Medical Framework for coordinated action on doctor and medical student wellbeing.

“The Framework, which brings together the best available evidence on what works to prevent and respond to mental ill-health and suicide in the medical profession, will be launched in coming months,” Dr Bartone said.

The *AMA Position Statement on the Health and Wellbeing of Doctors and Medical Students 2020* is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/health-and-wellbeing-doctors-and-medical-students-2020>

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