



Dear Colleagues,

At delegates training earlier this year we made a list of “issues” currently facing RMOs and ranked them in order of importance of addressing (all worthy, although some requiring more urgent action than others!). One issue that has been highlighted, not only at delegates training but also in multiple social and mainstream media forums, is RMO “wellness”.

You are undoubtedly aware that the medical profession has a significantly higher rate of mental illness and suicide than both the general public and many other professional groups. Despite this knowledge, little formalised attention is given to maintaining wellness amongst our profession. There are various reasons we don't utilise resources available to help improve our own wellbeing: time pressures, confidentiality, fear of career retribution, lack of support from employers/seniors/colleagues being a few. Where RMOs *have* tried to make changes to maintain wellness, for example arranging part time work, their efforts are often lost to an inflexible system—a system that has a history of being resistant to change and short sighted in its values. Improving our wellness is not only an individual's responsibility, it's the responsibility of colleagues, seniors, and employers to support an environment where this is achievable. Our recent improvements to limits on hours is one step towards improving RMO wellness from a systems perspective, but there are many more opportunities out there.

Our NZRDA executive team has been discussing further ways in which our organisation can support members to improve and maintain wellness, not only from a systems perspective, but at an individual level. As part of this project we have decided to fund a wellness app, “Headspace”. This app will be available at no cost for RDA members to utilise. So what is Headspace? Essentially, it's “meditation made simple: Headspace creates clever little tools to help you get more sleep, focus better and generally feel a bit perkier”. It takes as little as ten minutes a day, and I encourage those of you who are not currently dedicating time to your own wellbeing (or those who are but have room for more!) to check it out. Let's start to prioritise our own health too!

A recent post on Facebook, in response to a physician who took his own life, has some healthy advice:

Please, if you are stressed, if you are overwhelmed, if you are drowning, please don't die for medicine. It's not worth it. Go part time. Take a break. Have a holiday. Take a 12 month sabbatical and travel the world. Get to the gym or go for a walk. Get a puppy. Hug your loved ones. Practice mindfulness. Talk to a psychologist, your GP or someone you trust. Share your concerns with your colleagues. Ask for help. “Resilience” is not silence in the face of adversity, it's not stoicism, it's finding healthy ways of managing stress and keeping perspective. If you need to call in sick tomorrow because you feel like crying and you're not sure you can do another day, then please, call in sick. Don't worry about medical admin, consultants or managers. We'll all cover you. Because we've all

been there, we know what it's like and we all want you to get better. Be with your family. Let someone in. Don't suffer in silence.

I whole heartedly agree with the above advice, except the "Get a puppy" part... that can be quite a stressful undertaking in itself!

Our own health must be made a priority. If you would like to access the wellness app please go to the NZRDA website wellness page at www.nzrda.org.nz/rmo-wellness/ and follow the instructions.

Take care all.

He waka eke noa. We're all in this together.

Sara



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