



The National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students

About the survey

The survey is being conducted by *beyondblue* as part of its Doctors' Mental Health Program (bbDMHP). The survey is a world-first and will offer an unprecedented insight into the mental health of Australia's doctors and medical students and the best ways to support them.

Aims of the survey

The bbDMHP aims to address the prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders across the medical profession. The aims of the survey are to:

- understand issues associated with the mental health of Australia's doctors and medical students
- increase awareness across the medical profession and broader community of issues associated with the mental health of doctors
- inform the development and delivery of mental health programs, services and supports for the medical profession.

Why is *beyondblue* doing the survey?

The survey follows on from the findings of a systematic literature review commissioned by *beyondblue* in 2010 – *The Mental Health of Doctors: A Systematic Literature Review*. The review found that there is limited research examining the mental health of medical students and doctors that

is specific to the Australian context, with no studies focusing on rural or Indigenous doctors.

The findings from this national survey will be promoted broadly and enable existing mental health programs, services and supports to better meet the needs of the medical profession.

What input has the medical profession had into the survey?

The survey questionnaire and methodology were developed with input from a Project Advisory Group comprising leading experts in doctors' mental health.

The group is chaired by Professor David Clarke, former Head of Psychiatry at Monash University and comprises representatives from medical schools, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency Management Committee, the Medical Board of Australia, the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Medical Students' Association and National Junior Medical Officers' Forum, an international expert and a doctor with personal experience of mental illness.

An Advisory Committee informs the strategic directions of the bbDMHP and is chaired by Dr Mukesh Haikerwal AO, Chair of the World Medical Association and former President of the Australian Medical Association. The Advisory Committee is complemented by an Expert

Reference Group which has broad representation across the medical and mental health sectors.

Who can participate in the survey?

In February 2013, approximately 40,000 doctors and 8,000 medical students will be invited by mail to participate in the survey by completing a hard copy or online version of the questionnaire. This includes all doctors working in rural and remote areas. A sample of doctors and medical students participated in a pilot for the survey conducted in November 2012. The pilot has guided the approach to the main survey and will inform the overall findings.

How is *beyondblue* conducting the survey?

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has agreed to send out the survey questionnaire on behalf of *beyondblue*. This enables *beyondblue* to include every doctor and medical student in Australia in its sampling approach.

beyondblue has engaged Roy Morgan Research to collect and analyse the data on its behalf.

What is AHPRA's role?

AHPRA has no involvement in the study other than sending out the questionnaire on *beyondblue*'s behalf.

It is important for doctors and medical students to know that:

- The decision to participate in the survey will not impact on a doctors' or medical students' registration with AHPRA.
- The names and addresses of doctors and medical students have not been passed over by AHPRA to *beyondblue*.
- Data collected by *beyondblue* will not be passed on to AHPRA or the Medical Board of Australia or, in the case of medical students, the university at which they are enrolled.
- The costs of conducting the survey are being borne exclusively by *beyondblue* [i.e. registration fees have not been used to meet any of the costs of conducting the survey].
- The Medical Board of Australia has not disclosed the names and addresses of doctors and medical students or any other information to *beyondblue*.

Is the survey anonymous?

The survey is anonymous. The questionnaire does not ask doctors or medical students to provide their name, contact details or postcode in which they work. Data collected will be reported at group level only.

Is the survey voluntary?

The survey is voluntary. However, once doctors or medical students have mailed the survey or submitted a response online, they cannot withdraw their answers, as responses are anonymous.

What does the research involve?

Doctors and medical students invited to participate in the survey will firstly receive a letter advising them that they will be sent the survey questionnaire in about two weeks' time. The second letter will include several enclosures,



including the survey questionnaire, an explanatory statement and a reply paid envelope.

The questionnaire includes questions regarding mental health problems, risk factors, barriers to seeking support and treatment, coping strategies, and demographic details.

Recipients of the letter may then participate in the survey by:

- completing the hard copy questionnaire, enclosing it in the envelope and posting it to *beyondblue*

- visiting a secure URL and completing the questionnaire online.

All doctors and medical students will receive a reminder letter to complete the questionnaire (even if they have already completed the questionnaire) as the survey is anonymous and *beyondblue* is not tracking who has completed the survey.

How can I find out the results?

The results of the study will be available on the *beyondblue* website www.beyondblue.org.au from mid 2013. The results will be promoted broadly by *beyondblue*.

Where can I get further information about the study?

If you would like to contact *beyondblue* about any aspect of this study please call 03 9810 6103 or email workplace@beyondblue.org.au

What services and supports are available for doctors and medical students?

Doctors' Health Advisory Services

www.dhas.org.au

Personal advice to practitioners and students facing difficulties. There is a DHAS in each state and territory.

beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au 1300 22 4636

Information on depression and anxiety, available treatments and where to get help.

Lifeline

www.lifeline.org.au 13 11 14

Access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

Mindhealthconnect

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Access to online programs and trusted information on depression, stress or anxiety from the Australia's leading mental health organisations.



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