

Long Lives Healthy Workplaces

A range of risk factors can impact health professionals' mental health and wellbeing at work with anaesthetists facing a number of unique risk factors which can result in mental ill-health, poor general health and an increased risk of suicidal behaviour. The medical profession has a high level of stigma around mental health in the workplace and this is often compounded for anaesthetists.

Anaesthetists work in a highly stressful occupation and are exposed to trauma and death

Anaesthetists have high work demands and may or may not feel a sense of belonging to a particular team in the health service where they work

Anaesthetists work long hours, experience fatigue and are exposed to on-call stress

Strategies outlined in the toolkit

Actions with suggested activities

- **Tips for what you can do**
- **Tools to share with staff**
- **Resources available**

More detailed information and guidance is available in the full [toolkit](#)

The Long Lives Healthy Workplaces toolkit is designed for anaesthetists to help create mentally healthy workplaces so they can:

- **Reduce risks and stress load in the workplace**
- **Improve mental health and general wellbeing**
- **Build social connections among peers**
- **Develop action plans to support good mental health and the prevention of suicide**

This summary document gives you an idea of the initiatives you can action in your own workplaces.

Long Lives, Healthy Workplaces is an initiative of the ACE Wellbeing Special Interest Group and Everymind with support from the Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA).

For more information contact your Department Director.

Improve the culture of medicine to increase wellbeing and reduce stigma

Implement strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of all staff

- Identify mental health and health promotion programs for the workplace
- Promote digital platforms for improving individual wellbeing such as mindfulness, meditation, sleep and coping strategies.
- Promote a healthy lifestyle including diet, exercise, sleep and relaxation, quit-smoking assistance, responsible intake of alcohol and substance control.
- Include health, wellbeing and risks to health on the job in routine training and orientation
- Encourage activities that focus on mind, movement and nutrition including walking or standing meetings and healthy food options in the workplace

Increase connectedness and peer support

- Promote networking amongst staff and trainees as well as mentoring
- Establish peer review groups to network with co-workers and review complex cases
- Identify social media networks for staff to connect
- Connect with the Australian Society of Anaesthetists for ASA events
- Prioritise time together as a team and social activities
- Develop a social calendar and link activities to national health awareness days

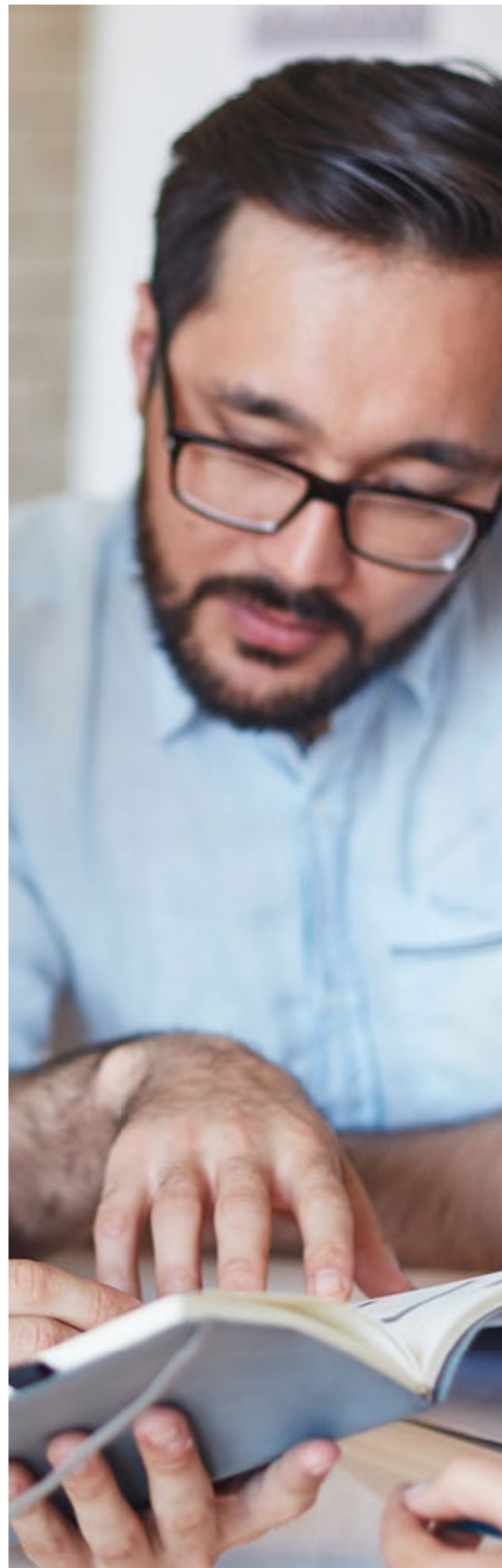
Address stigma associated with mental ill-health and suicide directly

- Encourage senior leaders and managers to speak openly about mental health and ill-health in the workplace and participate in activities or events to help reduce stigma
- Hold educational sessions for staff to hear stories from people with lived experience
- Promote zero tolerance for discrimination against staff who experience mental ill-health
- Ensure all managers and staff are aware of their legal responsibilities

Create a workplace where bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated

- Create greater awareness of bullying and unacceptable behaviours
- Provide information on what bullying looks like in the workplace, how to get help and how to be a supportive bystander
- Create or improve policies and protocols on workplace bullying with a zero tolerance approach

The Long Lives Healthy Workplaces Toolkit includes information specific for medical staff with online tools, programs and initiatives to implement in the workplace. The toolkit also has references for mentoring and peer support training programs.



Improve the training and work environment to reduce risk

Ensure job design, rosters and individual workloads are reviewed to reduce risks for mental ill-health

- Review rostering practices and develop safe working hour policies and practices
- Encourage flexibility with working hours and options to leave early on non-clinical days
- Provide staff with a physical space for breaks that are away from public areas

Design and manage a work environment that minimises harm

- Ensure all staff understand safe handling drug practices and review policies around access
- Provide opportunities for staff to contribute ongoing suggestions for improvement
- Educate and support staff on changes to mandatory reporting

Ensure adequate and structured access to training and professional development opportunities

- Provide mental health support for anaesthetic trainees during examination periods
- Explore opportunities or events that will provide professional development to staff
- Develop a professional strategy plan and schedule regular development and training

The Long Lives Healthy Workplaces Toolkit includes best practice guidelines and checklists to review.

Improve capacity to recognise and respond to those needing support

Improve the capacity of staff to recognise and respond to mental ill-health and suicide

- Provide education and training on mental ill-health and supporting yourself and colleagues
- Provide training for leaders and managers with a focus on mental health first aid, suicide prevention and debriefing practices to help create mentally health teams and identify staff members who may need additional support.
- Ensure that orientation for new staff contains information about mental health and wellbeing as well as mental ill-health
- Include mental health literacy training as part of the orientation process for new staff

Improve pathways to care for those who need support

- Create and promote a list of GPs and other external supports who understand the nature of the medical workforce
- Promote early help-seeking and encourage staff to take action
- Promote access to the ANZCA Doctor's Support Program for free confidential and independent counselling service for ANZCA fellows, trainees and immediate family members
- Educate staff of their ability to access a Mental Health Care Plan through their GP
- Raise awareness of support services such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Promote the availability and use of online treatments

The Long Lives Healthy Workplaces Toolkit includes information and training opportunities to enhance mental health literacy as well as tools for self-awareness and assessment.



Better support anaesthetists and trainees impacted by mental ill-health and suicide

Ensure effective processes to manage staff to stay at work or return to work

- Identify and train one or more welfare advocates for your department who junior staff and colleagues feel comfortable approaching – someone non-judgemental who is accessible and available with a sympathetic ear and who can maintain confidentially
- Develop stay-at-work or return-to-work plans for staff who have been diagnosed with mental ill-health

Ensure the department has policies and services available to support those impacted by suicide

- Have a protocol in place that advises how to notify staff in the event of a suicide that may impact on them and ways to communicate and provide support
- Ensure all staff have resources to support conversations about suicide. People who are vulnerable to suicide or bereaved by suicide can be particularly impacted by language.
- Ensure that services are available to support those who need specialist intervention after a suicide death to provide guidance and support to impacted staff.
- Provide staff with opportunities to support each other.

The Long Lives Healthy Workplaces Toolkit includes links to suicide prevention resources and information to assist people after a suicide has impacted them (postvention).

Improve leadership, coordination, data and information on the health and wellbeing of our professions

Improve leadership capability

- Provide education for leadership including mentors and supervisors
- Improve education about workplace bullying, mental health and ill-health, suicide prevention, communication about suicide and debriefing practices
- Offer specific training for leaders and managers that focuses on people management skills, mental health and ill-health, identifying staff at risk and supporting those with mental ill-health, as well as suicide prevention in the workplace

Improve data collection on the health and wellbeing of the profession

- Use existing staff surveys and results for your department to review and prioritise actions
- Consider supporting or collaborating on research trials and programs.

The Long Lives Healthy Workplaces Toolkit includes all the tips and tools needed to show leadership in creating mentally healthy workplaces.

