

Flinders Medical Students' Society Medical Student Health and Wellbeing Handbook



Flinders Medical Students' Society, proudly supported by:



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www.fmss.org.au

Introduction

Medical school is an exciting and challenging time. Along with these challenges come new sources of anxiety and stress. While learning to help patients care for themselves, it may seem as though we neglect our own health and well-being in the name of success.

If you are experiencing stress and anxiety related to medical school, you are not alone. Common themes of stress and anxiety across all four years of medical school include adherence to tough schedules, exam taking, sleep deprivation, and attempting to balance a healthy lifestyle while trying to meet goals. First year students often struggle with the increased work demand and adjustment to a new school. Students in 1st and 2nd year notoriously develop varying forms of hypochondriasis while studying many diseases for the first time. Third year students adjusting to clinical rotations may deal with real issues of life and death for the first time. Fourth year students, will soon face the transition from medical school to internship.

Moreover, literature shows that medical students are at increased risk for a host of other ills, including relationship trouble, poor diet, depression, and even an increased risk of suicide.¹ In addition, it has been shown that our health practices affect not only our own health, but also the way we, as doctors, advise our patients about important lifestyle issues such as diet and exercise.²

In other words, wellness in medical school is commonly compromised. With this in mind, remember: although stress is a necessary part of life, it does not have to prohibit well-being.

References

1. AMSA. Medical Student Well-Being. American Medical Student Association, 2010. <http://www.amsa.org/AMSA/Homepage/About/Priorities/Professional/WellBeing.aspx>
2. Wolf TM. Stress, coping and health: enhancing well-being during medical school. *Med Educ.* 1994 Jan;28(1):8-17; discussion 55-7.
3. Sherman SE, Hershman WY. Exercise counseling: how do general internists do? *J Gen Intern Med.* 1993 May;8(5):243-8.

FMSS:

Health, Wellbeing & Antidiscrimination

Flinders Medical Students' Society (FMSS) is the peak organisation representing medical students (**you!**) at Flinders. FMSS is the key group that advocates for medical students in areas such as medical education, intern allocations and student support.

In the area of student wellbeing, FMSS plays a role in connecting medical students with help when needed. We work with medical school staff including the Dean, Course Committees, the Student Affairs Committee and Year Level Coordinators to promote good health for medical students, emphasising the preventative aspects of health and wellbeing.

Each year, FMSS elects a Director of Health, Wellbeing & Antidiscrimination, a representative responsible for creating a supportive environment for students and for helping you to maintain personal wellbeing and self-care, in what can often be a very difficult academic environment. Additionally, FMSS opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying, most of which happens discretely, and anyone who believes they have experienced this is encouraged to contact the Director of Health, Wellbeing & Antidiscrimination. Any concerns you have will be **strictly confidential** and will **only** be disclosed to the Executive Committee of FMSS and various staff members of the School of Medicine **with your permission**.

Ultimately, we want to see you succeed in, and enjoy medical school. We hope you will participate in extracurricular activities for your own enjoyment and benefit, and that our Health and Wellbeing events this year give you an insight into some of the challenges of a life in medicine, as well as some practical ideas for leading a balanced lifestyle.

This book is intended as a resource for you to keep throughout your student years at Flinders, as well as where to go for further assistance should you need it.

Rachel Mellor, BMBS II

Director of Health, Wellbeing and Anti-Discrimination, 2011

Flinders Medical Students' Society

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AMSA:

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind Campaign

The Australian Medical Students Association is the national organisation representing all medical students in Australia. *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind* is their national student wellbeing campaign. *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind* acknowledges that the heavy workload imposed by medicine can lead to a variety of personal difficulties. These may manifest as reduced physical activity, inadequate sleep, mental health problems, poor eating habits, substance abuse or financial difficulties.¹

There are no simple solutions to these issues, but there are a few things that AMSA recommends can reduce your troubles:

- Allow time for regular physical activity.
- Allocate enough time for sleep.
- Share your feelings with those close to you.
- See your general practitioner regularly (See page 8 for a list of GPs who would like to see Flinders Medical Students long-term)
- Organise your time efficiently and plan ahead.
- Maintain a good diet. Don't rely on fast food.
- Discuss ways to save more effectively with your bank.
- See if you are eligible for Centrelink assistance.
- Check university notice boards for work that fits your studies

Where to get active in Adelaide!

- Flinders One Gym – convenient location, just above the medical school on campus, gym facilities, group classes, as well as social sport teams: www.onesportandfitness.com.au
- Speak to your classmates about starting a social sporting team at Flinders (Netball, basketball, indoor soccer, touch football, Frisbee and more!)
- Walking – on campus, or beaches nearby
- Swimming – Marion swimming centre, Oaklands Road (cnr. Hendrie Street)
- Search online for sports teams in your area, or speak to people from Adelaide about clubs you could join

References

1. AMSA. The Healthy Body, Healthy Mind Campaign. Australian Medical Students Association, 2010. <http://www.amsa.org.au/content/healthy-body-healthy-mind-campaign>

Health Services for Medical Students

Flinders University Health Service

The Health Service is a fully equipped and accredited Medical Centre and is open from 8.45 to 5pm Monday to Friday. It is available to all Flinders University students and staff and consultations are strictly confidential.

The general-practice Health Service is staffed by male and female medical practitioners. It provides emergency and routine medical care, as well as other services such as first aid, health screens (pap smears, skin checks, cholesterol, STDs etc), student vaccinations and referrals.

The doctors are familiar with the university's policies and procedures and can support applications for extensions for assignments and supplementary examinations. All consultations are confidential and services are bulk-billed. You need to bring your Medicare Card (Australian students) or OSHC Worldcare Card. International students with a different private health insurer will need to pay up-front and have the money reimbursed by the insurance company.

Consulting Hours: 8:45am - 5pm, Monday – Friday.

Level 3, Student Services Centre (next to the Sports Centre)

Flinders University Main Campus phone: 8201 2118)

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/current-students/healthandcounselling/health.cfm>

Free Confidential Counselling

Dr. Sue O'Brien

Dr Sue O'Brien works as a GP and counsellor at the Health & Counselling Service (Level 3, Student Centre, next to the Sports Centre, Main Campus). She is not involved in teaching or course assessment. Discussions are fully confidential. Information is only given to the School of Medicine at the request or with the permission of the student. Counselling of couples is available.

Dr O'Brien has been a GP at the Health & Counselling Service for over 25 years. The School of Medicine appointed her as Counsellor for medical students in 1985 when medical student interviews expressed a preference for a counsellor who was not involved with teaching or course assessment but who had a first hand

Free Confidential Counselling (cont.)

familiarity with the culture of Medicine. Having married and raised children she is particularly interested in the issues of optimal work/life balance in medical students and young doctors. A weekly session specifically for medical students is available at the Health and Counselling Service on Thursday afternoons. Appointments of up to an hour can be made by telephoning the Health & Counselling Service, 12118 (internal) or 8201-2118.

On other weekdays, appointments can be made in Dr O'Brien's medical consulting time. Ask for a double appointment (40 minutes) if necessary, and say you are a medical student.

Additionally, several counsellors (for students in all faculties) are available for free consultation on weekdays at the Health & Counselling Service. Appointments of an hour can be arranged, phone 8201 2118. Confidential email access to a counsellor is via: health.counsel@flinders.edu.au. There is also a Mon-Fri daily drop-in service, for urgent issues (on a first come, first served basis: phone from 8.45 am) at the Health and Counselling Service.

Confidential Counselling and Support Services in the Northern Territory

Flinders students based in the NT may contact Dr Sue O'Brien (see details above). A weekly face to face counselling session is available with Dr O'Brien at Flinders University on Friday afternoons. Telephone appointments with Dr O'Brien can also be made by telephoning the Health, Counselling and Disability Services on 8201 2118. The student can book an appointment time with Dr O'Brien and she will call the student back at the designated time. The student should advise the receptionist that they are a rural medical student calling for a phone consult.

Several other counsellors are also available for free phone consultations on weekdays at the Flinders Health, Counselling and Disability Services. Phone 8201 2118 and ask for a counsellor to return the call. Confidential email access to a counsellor is via health.counsel@flinders.edu.au

Health Services for Medical Students (cont.)

GP Services

All doctors and medical students should establish an ongoing relationship with a general practitioner that they trust. The following doctors and medical clinics in the General Practice South Network have expressed that they would be happy to see Flinders medical students confidentially and long-term.

Dr Belinda Coyte
Allcare Medical Clinic
161 Edward St, Melrose Park
SA 5039
Phone: 08 8371 1191

Dr Name
Clinic
Address 1, Suburb
SA Postcode
Phone: number

Dr Name
Clinic
Address 1, Suburb
SA Postcode
Phone: number

Dr Name
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Address 1, Suburb
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GP Services (cont.)

Dr Belinda Coyte

Allcare Medical Clinic
161 Edward St, Melrose Park
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Phone: 08 8371 1191

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Dr Name

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Phone: number

If You Need Help: Important Contacts

A recent literature review showed that medical students and doctors suffer significant rates of depression and anxiety related disorders. For information on how to help identify depression in yourself or others, we recommend the *beyondblue: national depression initiative* website: www.beyondblue.com.au. If you're worried that you may be depressed, the best person to see is your GP – so if you don't have one, get one! See pages 8-9.

Flinders University Health Service offers a dedicated urgent drop-in service operating from Monday to Friday. Phone 8201 2118 each morning from 8:45am to make an appointment for that day.

Other Counselling and Crisis Phone lines:

- Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14
- Crisis Care (4pm-9am): 13 16 11
- Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours): 1800 800 098
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service: 1300 782 200
- Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service: 8226 8787 (24 hours); 1800 817 421 (toll free)
- ACIS (Acute Crisis Intervention Service: Adult Mental Health): 13 14 65
- Alcohol and Drug Information Service (24 hours): 1300 13 13 40
- Mensline (24 hours): 1300 78 99 78
- Women's Information Service: 8303 0590; 1800 188 158

If you are having **academic difficulties** associated with the course, we recommend that you contact your Year level coordinator in the first instance – all discussions will be completely confidential. If you do not feel like your concerns have been responded to or would prefer to speak to student representatives, FMSS can advocate on your behalf directly to the School.

If you are ever feeling overwhelmed and need to speak to someone urgently, please contact the FMSS Director of Health and Wellbeing. There is always something that can be done to help.

Tips from Other Students

Here are a few suggestions from students who have been through first year recently.

Have a social life or other interests outside of med that is not with other medical student friends. Maybe setting a personal goal which can be a good, but healthy, distraction/motivator - for me it was completing the 12km City to Bay Fun Run.

It's easy to forget how good exercise is at reducing your stress.

I schedule in an hour of 'Me Time' to my week which is just for me to do as I please and not feel guilty about it.

Talk about it/vent!!!

Get your food organised!! - I found it really helpful planning what meals I was going to eat each week, and cooking up a massive dish that lasted a few nights at the start of the week - this allowed me to set time aside to enjoy cooking, ensured I ate decent food, and meant that other nights when I might be home late from uni/gym/sport, I didn't have to worry about food!

Accept that the learning you are going to be doing in medical school and the medical profession is going to be never-ending, there is no way that you can learn everything in the time that you have. The first two years of medical school are very focused on the overall concepts – the big picture – so don't worry insanely about the detail, just get a grasp of the big things and learn them well, that will help you get through exams.

Stress is a good motivator and normal. Try not to get too overworked about exams, you've done them before, so you can do them now.

Find some people who work/study in a similar way to you – the best way to get through medical school is with the support of your peers – so ask them all the silly questions and try and find a study group, it helps!

Just breathe. Take time away from your studies to enjoy the little things in life.

Try to speak to as many senior students as possible, as well as your 2nd year buddy/mentor to get some more tips on how to handle the adjustment.



Contact:
Flinders Medical Students' Society
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