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# CLINICIAN WELLBEING IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC

*Heading into the pandemic 16 months ago, none of us knew what was ahead. It was like waiting for a tsunami but not knowing exactly when it would hit.*

We were guided by what we were seeing on the news, internal briefings, and from reports and conversations with our clinical colleagues overseas.

As clinicians, we bunkered down and started preparing for the worst.

It was a stressful period for everyone – not knowing what was ahead, juggling our existing roles with prepping our hospitals for a potential influx of patients, worrying about whether we would become sick and pass it on to our families.

As the first positive COVID-19 cases reached Australia and Queensland, we were on high alert for a wave to begin. We were all running on adrenaline and I think many of us still are.

It's been a tough time, and we are all well versed in how quickly the situation can escalate.

We're not sure as yet when the situation will be 'over'. As I write this, case numbers and deaths continue to rise in India and the Australian Government has paused flights from the southern Asia country.

Certainly, the rollout of the vaccine has given us hope and a sense that there is light at the end of the tunnel. As an emergency physician, I am incredibly grateful to be among the more than 140,000 Queenslanders to have been vaccinated.

But we still have a long way to go and many of us are tired, even exhausted, from the wild ride that is the COVID-19 global pandemic.

And that's why we need to talk about the health and wellbeing of clinicians.

We are all aware of the link between clinician wellbeing and patient outcomes.

Evidence suggests that health care providers who have poor health or suffer from burnout are much more likely to make medication prescribing errors, less likely to show compassion and empathy to their patients, and their patients are more likely to suffer an adverse event.

The converse is also true. Patients of clinicians who are healthy with high levels of job satisfaction have much better outcomes.

So now is the time for us to prioritise our own health and wellbeing.

We need to do the basic things like eat nutritious food regularly, drink enough water, take short breaks and get enough sleep.

Let's talk to our colleagues about how we're feeling and look out for one another.

Let's say 'no' more often and prioritise our activities so that we have time to slow down and do something that fills our bucket – whether that's a long walk, reading a book or having an afternoon sleep.

For us to continue to provide the very best of care for sick and vulnerable Queenslanders and continue to respond to the global pandemic, it's critical that we look after ourselves. What will you do for your wellbeing today?

For more on clinician wellbeing, listen to the Queensland Clinical Senate's podcast with experienced social worker and staff wellbeing consultant, Liz Crowe.

Whooshkaa:  
[player.whooshkaa.com/  
episode?id=820097](https://player.whooshkaa.com/episode?id=820097)

Apple podcasts:  
[podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/  
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## HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- ▶ The Queensland Doctors' Health Programme provides a confidential, colleague-to-colleague support service for doctors and medical students facing difficulties.  
[dhq.org.au](https://dhq.org.au)
- ▶ Wellness, Resilience and Performance in Emergency Medicine  
[wrapem.org](https://wrapem.org)