

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee](#)
Subject: mental health problems in doctors.
Date: Monday, 26 November 2018 8:42:13 PM

Dear Folks,

Mental health problems are ubiquitous and doctors are no exception. Arguably given the links between stress and anxiety and depression they may be more at risk, especially in certain specialties, and at certain times of their careers (eg post graduate exam and just after.)

It is really important that doctors get help when they need it and (having dealt with numbers of friends, colleagues and junior doctors with mental health issues in the past) unfortunately stigma around mental health illness is alive and well. Mandatory reporting will almost certainly have the (albeit unintended) effect of making doctors delay or avoid seeking help for their own problems. Many of them already wait until it is too late , and mandatory reporting will , in my view, see doctors fail to seek help, and will also make them delay presentation, in some cases until they take matters into their own hands, either by self medicating or in more tragic ways.

It should be left to the treating practitioner whether such problems are significant enough to report , (where there is no insight) or, where there is a problem with insight , reporting could occur with consent., as in other medical illnesses.

From a practical point of view, if we include all doctors who drink too much alcohol by recommended standards (yet function well) as well as those who have some anxiety , then large numbers of doctors will be reported , overwhelming the well meaning attempts to keep patients safe .

As most mental health problems are temporary (but stigma is not) it seems unfair to insist on mandatory reporting , given some of the negative consequences which are likely to ensue.

It may be a better idea to mandate that all doctors have regular visits to a GP , and let them care for us, and do what is needed. Many doctors still don't have their own GP, a cause for concern.

Regards

Dr Marianne Cannon

MBBS MPH FACEM