

Evaluation of the Western Health COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing and Support Initiatives

Summary of findings

Dear study participants

Thank you once again for your interest in our study, ‘Evaluation of the Western Health COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing and Support Initiatives’, and for completing a survey and/or participating in an interview.

The aim of the study was to evaluate the wellbeing and support initiatives implemented at Western Health (WH) during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives and experiences of employees (both users and non-users) and key stakeholders to determine if the initiatives met employees’ needs.

This summary reports the findings from the survey and interviews.

What did we find?

Survey

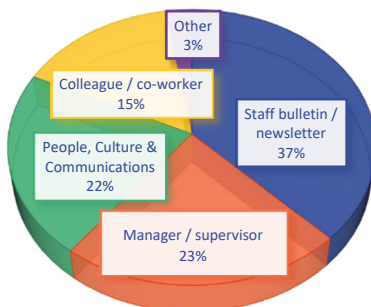
We had a great response to the invitation to participate in the study which was sent to all WH staff (both clinical and non-clinical staff). We received 907 completed surveys; a response rate of about 13%.

Most survey respondents were female (n=726, 83.4%), nurses (n=356, 41.2%) and based at Sunshine Hospital (n=590, 65.0%); approximately half were part-time employees (n=434, 50.3%); and about a third (n=252, 29.2%) had been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had contact with someone who had been diagnosed.

Awareness and use of the wellbeing and support initiatives: We asked survey respondents whether they knew about and/or had used the staff wellbeing and support initiatives that had been implemented at WH during the COVID-19 pandemic including the wellness hubs, staff bulletins, the wellbeing website which included wellbeing and COVID-19 information sheets, and the employee assistance program (EAP).

Most (n=747, 86.2%) said that they were aware of the initiatives and heard about them from staff bulletins.

Heard about initiatives from ...



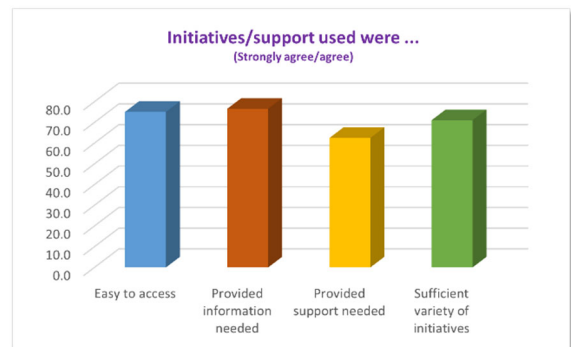
Less than half (n=314, 42.7%) of the survey respondents indicated that they had used the initiatives. However, of these, three-quarters said they

would use them again (n=203, 78.1%) and recommend the initiatives to their colleagues (n=200, 76.9%).

Several barriers to using the initiatives were reported including high workload, difficulties accessing (eg not on-site, night shift), and a perception that the initiatives were only for clinical staff.

The most used initiatives were the daily staff briefings, wellbeing and support updates, wellness hubs, information sheets, working from home, webinars and Kindness Matters website.

Feedback about the initiatives was mostly positive; staff reported that they were easy to use, provided the information and support they needed, and that a sufficient variety of initiatives were available.



Many staff wrote comments at the end of the survey about their perceptions of the initiatives. For example:

“There should be wellness hubs available on an ongoing basis ... Even without a pandemic, people are always dealing with issues, grief, sadness, a loss etc and having a quiet peaceful place to rest and recharge helps support mental health and wellbeing.” (Survey respondent)

“Better communication of what is available plus work time granted to access them.” (Survey respondent)

Interviews

Ten staff members participated in an interview.

Similar to the survey respondents, interview participants reported that they heard about the wellbeing initiatives from staff emails and their colleagues.

Participants thought it was good that WH had implemented the initiatives and especially liked the Wellness Hubs and CEO Forums but felt that communication about the initiatives could have been improved and targeted to particular staff groups.

“I think overall the initiatives were good ... is probably the first time in nearly 10 years working at WH where there's been a real definitive focus on wellbeing”.
(Interview participant)

Staff recommendations: Survey respondents and interview participants indicated that they would like many of the initiatives to continue post COVID and made several recommendations for improving or modifying the initiatives to better meet staff needs and ensuring the initiatives were available and accessible to staff from different professional groups and sites.

The recommendations suggested by staff included: better communication about what was available, continuing the Wellness Hubs (with some changes such as more natural light), a simpler process for working remotely, making the wellbeing pages of the WH COVID-19 microsite easier to navigate, and education for line managers and team leaders about staff wellbeing.

(Note: since the data was collected for this study, WH has begun implementing some changes to several of these policies and procedures or developing new programs).

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that the WH COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing and Support Initiatives were well used and appreciated by staff; and had a positive impact on their mental and physical health and relationships with others. Staff would like many of the initiatives (with some modifications) to continue after the COVID-19 pandemic.

What's next?

So what are the next steps for the study?

Dissemination of findings: We plan to distribute the findings in a number of ways including peer-reviewed journal publications and presentations about the study and its findings. We have also provided a report about the findings to People, Culture and Communication at WH.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the study or the findings please contact Dr Sara Holton via email: s.holton@deakin.edu.au .

Thank you once again for your interest in and support of our study!

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