

# COVID-19 wellbeing and support initiatives for healthcare workers

Dr Sara Holton, Dr Karen Wynter, Professor Bodil Rasmussen, Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research.  
**Partner organisation:** Western Health

## The challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the psychological wellbeing of people working in healthcare services.

The project team partnered with [Western Health](#), a large tertiary health service in Melbourne, to investigate staff members' experiences and use of employee wellbeing initiatives implemented during the pandemic.

## Our response

More than 900 Western Health employees completed a survey to provide feedback on the initiatives. A further 10 employees were interviewed and data about the initiatives' use was collected from Western Health databases.

## The results

The project team found that the initiatives were well used and appreciated by staff. Seventy-nine per cent of participants reported that the initiatives improved their ability to cope with COVID-19-related stress and anxiety.

Staff also reported that they would like many of the initiatives to continue after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants reports that the provision of wellness hubs allowed clinical staff to regroup and take a break in a quiet space. Participants were most satisfied with the wellbeing hubs (79%), followed by wellbeing and support updates (73%), daily staff briefings (66%) and the COVID-19 Wellbeing Microsite (63%).

Barriers to accessing the initiatives included high workloads, difficulties accessing initiatives on-site (e.g. night shift staff), and a perception that the initiatives were only for clinical staff.

Participants also reported that communications about the initiatives could be improved, stating that communication in a variety of formats would assist in promoting the initiatives to employees who did not have access to computers (e.g. cleaners and kitchen staff) or had limited English proficiency.

The findings have been [published in the \*Occupational Medicine\* academic journal](#), promoted on [Western Health's website](#), discussed by the Western Health CEO at his regular [CEO Staff Webinar on 19 July 2022](#), shared on social media, and a [summary of the results](#) was been sent to all participants who requested one.

## The impact

The project was one of the first of its kind in Australia and was featured in [ABC News](#).

Western Health has used the findings to refine the initiatives based on the modifications suggested by staff, as well as develop new programs.

*'This research has identified that the needs of health service staff are many and varied, and may evolve over time. Western Health will continue to work in partnership with staff to ensure the support initiatives are tailored to their needs.'*

Sandy Schutte, Western Health Executive Director (Acting) People Culture and Communications

The project has since expanded to 4 other health services in Victoria (Barwon Health, Eastern Health, Epworth Healthcare and Monash Health) and a Danish health service (Odense University Hospital).

For more information, contact Dr Sara Holton:  
[s.holton@deakin.edu.au](mailto:s.holton@deakin.edu.au)



INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH  
TRANSFORMATION



This study was funded by Western Health.

