

TOOGOOD SOCKS FOR A HEALTHY MIND



Dr Geoffrey Toogood – Melbourne cardiologist, beyondblue ambassador, channel swimmer and father – might be better known these days for his socks. You may have heard of the Twitter phenomenon #CrazySocks4Docs, which raises awareness of mental health issues and encourages colleagues to look out for each other.

Like many doctors, Geoff Toogood had delayed seeking help for his depression, partly because he was concerned about the implications for his career. When he did seek help, it was difficult to get leave when he didn't have a physical illness. After recovering, he wanted to share his story in the hope of reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Geoff says he had no notion that the idea would take off the way that it did. He thought it might just be a few mates and a couple of tweets. Instead, healthcare professionals, politicians and supporters around Australia shared their pictures and their stories. Then the rest of the world began to join in.

He is not surprised the issue struck a chord, sensing increasing pressure on the profession and a growing feeling that things have become harder. Medicine, he says, is a tough career, but we don't need to make it impossible.

“ It's far easier to bounce on a trampoline than concrete. ”

He doesn't dispute that practising medicine requires resilience or the ability to bounce back from adversity, and argues most doctors can endure great pressure. However, easing doctors' distress requires more supportive environments. "It's far easier to bounce on a trampoline than concrete, and medicine has too much concrete."

A supportive environment is somewhere it's OK to have a rough day, and where colleagues support each other rather than criticising. In other words, a workplace where you are encouraged to be proactive about looking after your health, and where someone would take you aside for a quiet word if your performance was off.

A few years ago, no one wanted to hear about mental wellbeing among doctors, but now hospitals are organising grand rounds on the topic. Some hospitals and teams have created brilliant cultures, with supportive communities. Crazysocks2018 is almost certainly going to help continue that strong community of support.

Useful resources

Avant Personal Support Program

Avant members who are suffering mental health issues can access a range of support options including up to six sessions of confidential, external counselling provided by Davidson Trahaire Corpsych (DTC), a leading global provider of corporate psychology services.

The counselling service offers objective psychological support and the provision of coping skills for a range of work-related issues such as work stress, issues with patients, personal issues relating to anxiety or depression, and legal issues around medico-legal complaints. Options available include face-to-face counselling, phone support or video counselling.

1300 360 364

Further resources can be found on our health and wellbeing website:

avant.org.au/health-and-wellbeing

beyondblue

1300 224 636 | beyondblue.org.au

Doctors' Health Advisory Services

NSW & ACT

Doctors' Health Advisory Service NSW & ACT
02 9437 6552 | dhas.org.au

Queensland

Doctors' Health Advisory Service Queensland
07 3833 4352 | dhasq.org.au

South Australia & Northern Territory

Doctors' Health SA
08 8366 0250 | doctorshealthsa.com.au

Victoria & Tasmania

Victorian Doctors' Health Program
03 9495 6011 | vdhp.org.au

Western Australia

Doctors' Health Advisory Service WA
08 9321 3098 | dhas.org.au