

NAPSA Policy

Mental Health and Wellbeing

(2024)

Background

The National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) recognises the critical importance of addressing the mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by pharmacy students. In Australia, around four million people will experience a chronic or episodic event each year. It is stated that 50% of Australians will experience challenges to their mental health in their lifetime [1]. Recent studies have revealed that approximately 25% of University students experiencing mental health issues during their academic journey with an alarming 14% experiencing suicide-related outcomes [2]. Alarming, a survey has revealed that 70% of tertiary students across Australia have rated their mental health as being poor or fair [3]. It's important to recognise that students currently undertake activities other than academic studies. Higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress were associated with workforce participation totalling above 20 hours a week and family care responsibilities [4].

One of the biggest barriers to mental health care is the stigma associated with mental illness [5]. Although stigma is not exclusively associated with mental illness, compared to physical illness, there is a disproportionate level of stigma geared towards mental illness that is perceived by the public. Stigma perceived by an individual influences their decision to not seek mental health care [5].

Considering these concerning statistics and trends, NAPSA is firmly committed to establishing guidelines and support mechanisms that promote the mental well-being of pharmacy students throughout their academic journey. We recognise the significance of ensuring that mental health services and programs are easily accessible and user-friendly for pharmacy students.

NAPSA's Position:

- Mental health is an important element of wellbeing for pharmacy students
- Collaboration between stakeholders including the federal, state and territory governments, universities, and pharmacy schools, NAPSA and its branches and pharmacy students is vital to ensure the effective support of mental health and wellbeing of all pharmacy students.
- All pharmacy students have the right to access adequate and accessible mental health services in a timely manner
- The mental health and wellbeing of pharmacy students deserves joint responsibility between all stakeholders.
- The continual effort to destigmatise mental illness is welcomed and should continue.
- All Pharmacy students should not feel pressure, coercion or judgement when making decisions regarding their own mental health.
- Mental health strategies for students should be student focused/patient centered; implemented based on best evidence and provide the best care to all students.
- Mental health needs change with time. Recognition of, and response to changes are required to provide the best mental health care for all pharmacy students.

NAPSA will continue to advocate and promote mental health and wellbeing for all pharmacy students. We will continue to work alongside our stakeholders to ensure a healthy work and learning environment for our students. Importantly, we encourage the continual work to destigmatise mental illness within the community. This lays foundations for a work and study culture that is supportive, friendly, and free from bullying and harassment.

As individuals, pharmacy students are encouraged to look after themselves and their peers. NAPSA recommends that all pharmacy students consider the following:

- Look after one another. Check in regularly with your peers. Identify risks towards your own mental health and that of your peers and take necessary action to ensure the wellbeing of all involved.
- Take care of yourself. Engage in regular self mental health assessment. Always seek support from trusted individuals and organisations including but not limited to, friends and family, mentors, mental health professionals and clinicians and other community mental health services as required.
- Engage thoughtfully in conversations with trusted individuals around mental health including struggles and challenges, wellbeing maintenance and utilisation of services to help reduce stigma surrounding mental health.
- Research into, undertake and complete a mental health first aid course.

NAPSA is committed to creating a supportive environment that prioritises the mental health and wellbeing of pharmacy students. This policy will guide our efforts in addressing mental health challenges and promoting a healthy and fulfilling academic journey for all pharmacy students.

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