

## Media Release

### A leader who listens improves mental health of workers

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A recent study has shown a positive relationship with one's boss is key to the overall health and mental wellbeing of Australian workers.

The study, commissioned by a leading multi-national company with sites located across Australia, found work arrangements, roster, gender or ethnic background did not necessarily influence a worker's mental wellbeing – it was social support within and outside work which led to more effective coping strategies and a willingness to ask for help.

Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) President Associate Professor Peter Connaughton shared the findings at the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) Congress event in Melbourne this week.

“The research found that employees with lower levels of mental wellbeing were less likely to talk to their leader if they were feeling unwell or experiencing stress, while those with higher levels of mental wellbeing reported having a better relationship with their leader.”

While the company had significant data on the physical health of their employees, particularly in regards to occupational health and safety, far less was known about the mental wellbeing of employees.

“While it may sound clichéd, it is clear that a sense of ‘belonging and purpose’ in the workplace is an important ingredient to good mental wellbeing,” said Associate Professor Connaughton.

The initial study has given the company a foundation for continual improvement.

Initiatives already being implemented include equipping leaders with skills to have positive conversations with their staff on mental health through training. Procedures are being strengthened to ensure staff feel confident they are part of the team and are able to ask for help.

“The data collected in the baseline study was the first step, it confirmed some aspects we were aware of, and has already led to initiatives that are producing positive results. Follow up surveys will help track progress and continue to support employees,” said Associate Professor Connaughton.

**Ends**

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**About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP):** The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.