

Psychological Well-being of Australian Hospital Clinical Staff during the COVID-19 pandemic

Professor Bodil Rasmussen on behalf of co-investigators

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Australian College of Infectious Prevention and Control

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Background

- Mental health has been poor among many healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Recent meta-analysis included 40 systematic reviews
- Limited evidence:
 - In Australia
 - Across more than one time point
 - In healthcare workers working in community (not acute) care
 - Non-clinical staff in healthcare organisations
 - Effectiveness of interventions to prevent /reduce poor mental health



COVID-19 Pandemic and Overall Mental Health of Healthcare Professionals Globally: A Meta-Review of Systematic Reviews

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Objective: This meta-review aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of overall mental health of healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method: We conducted a comprehensive literature search on Academic Search Premier, CINAHL, Cochrane Library, and MEDLINE. A predefined eligibility criterion was used to screen the articles. The methodology quality of eligible studies was assessed using Joanna Briggs Institute checklist for systematic reviews. The data were narratively synthesised in line with the meta-review aim.

Result: Forty systematic reviews (represented as $K = 40$), which reported data from 1,828 primary studies (N) and 3,245,768 participants, met the inclusion criteria. The

Aim

To assess the psychosocial wellbeing of healthcare workers during COVID-19:

- *Nurses & midwives at Western Health, Eastern Health, Epworth Healthcare and Monash Health in 2020*
- *Nurses, midwives, allied health staff and doctors at Western Health, two time points in 2020 and third time in 2021-2022*
- *Clinical and non-clinical healthcare workers in community health services in Victoria, two time points in 2021 (in collaboration with VHA)*

To evaluate

- *healthcare worker wellness and support programs at Western Health*

To co-design

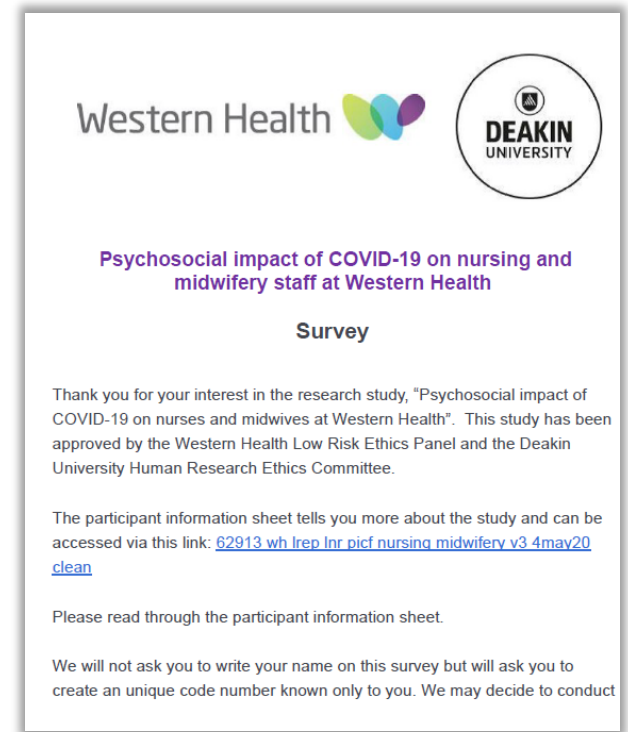
- *With healthcare workers, a systems thinking approach to supporting and improving healthcare worker wellbeing at Western Health*

Methods

Study design:

- Anonymous, online, cross-sectional survey (invitations sent by email)
- Survey assessed:
 - Sociodemographic and employment characteristics
 - Psychological wellbeing (DASS-21)
 - COVID-19 contact status
 - COVID-19 concerns and impact on personal and work lives
 - Perceptions of health service response to COVID-19
 - Free-text comments

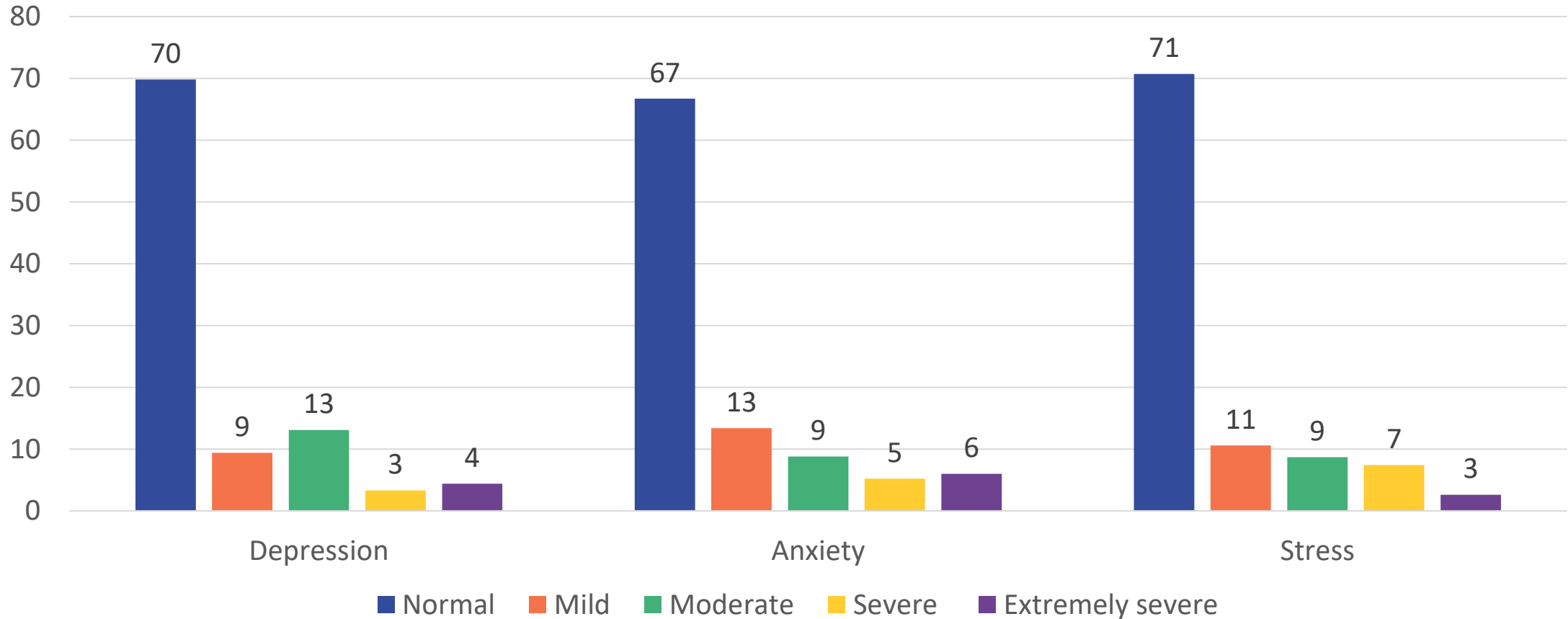
Ethics approval: WH LREP (HREC/20/WH/62913, 6 May 2020)



Victorian nurses and midwives (n=1,611)

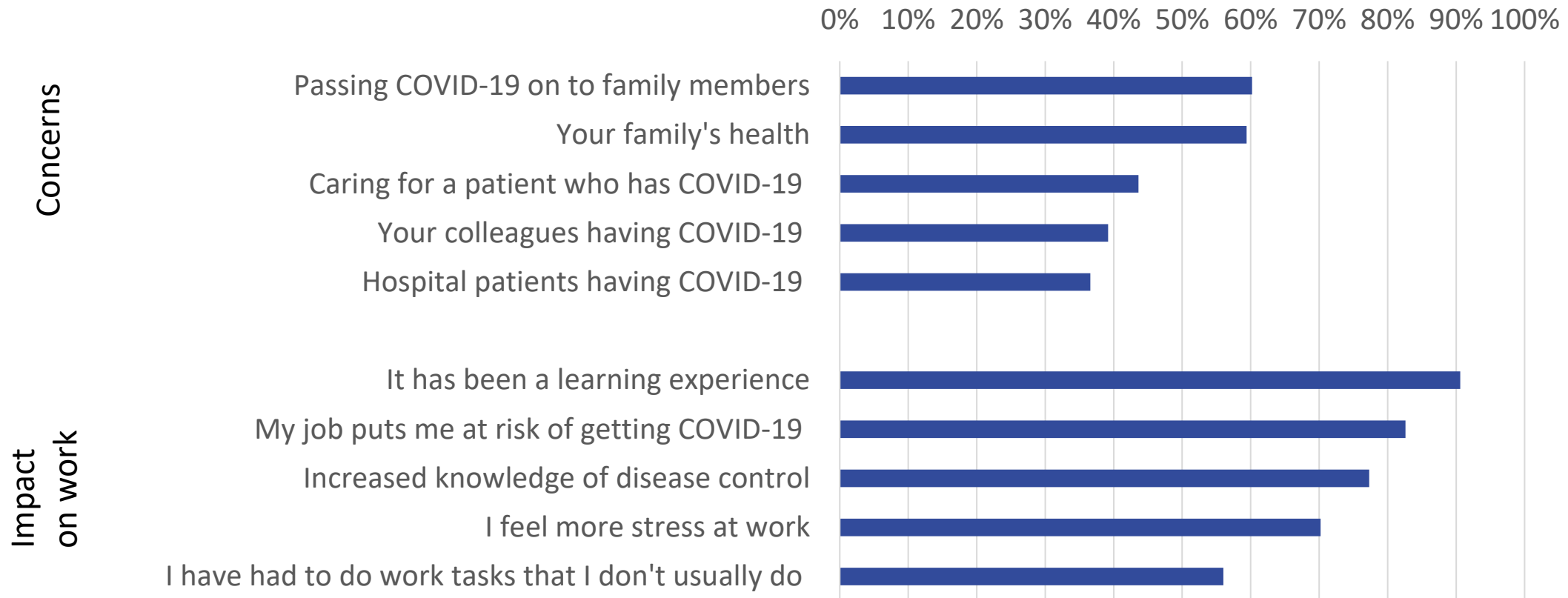
Proportion reporting symptoms on DASS subscales

May – August 2020



Victorian nurses and midwives (n=1,611)

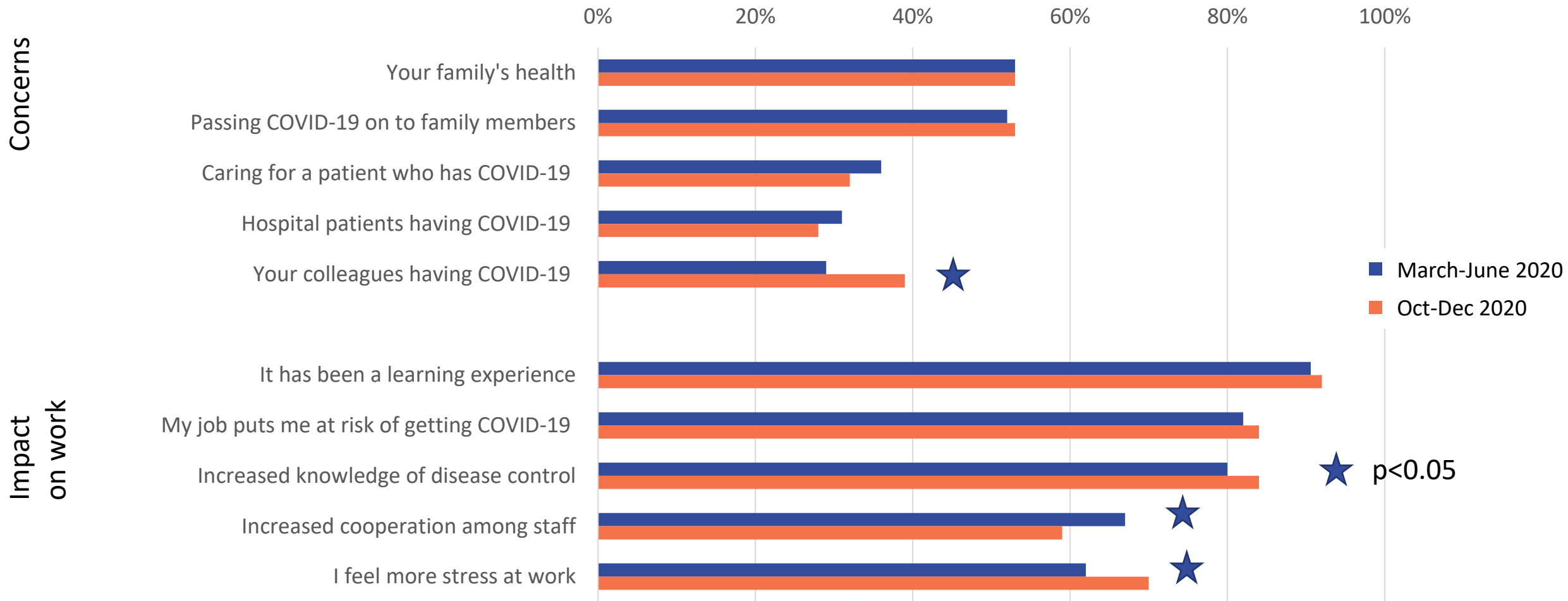
Common concerns and reported impacts



Western Health clinical staff

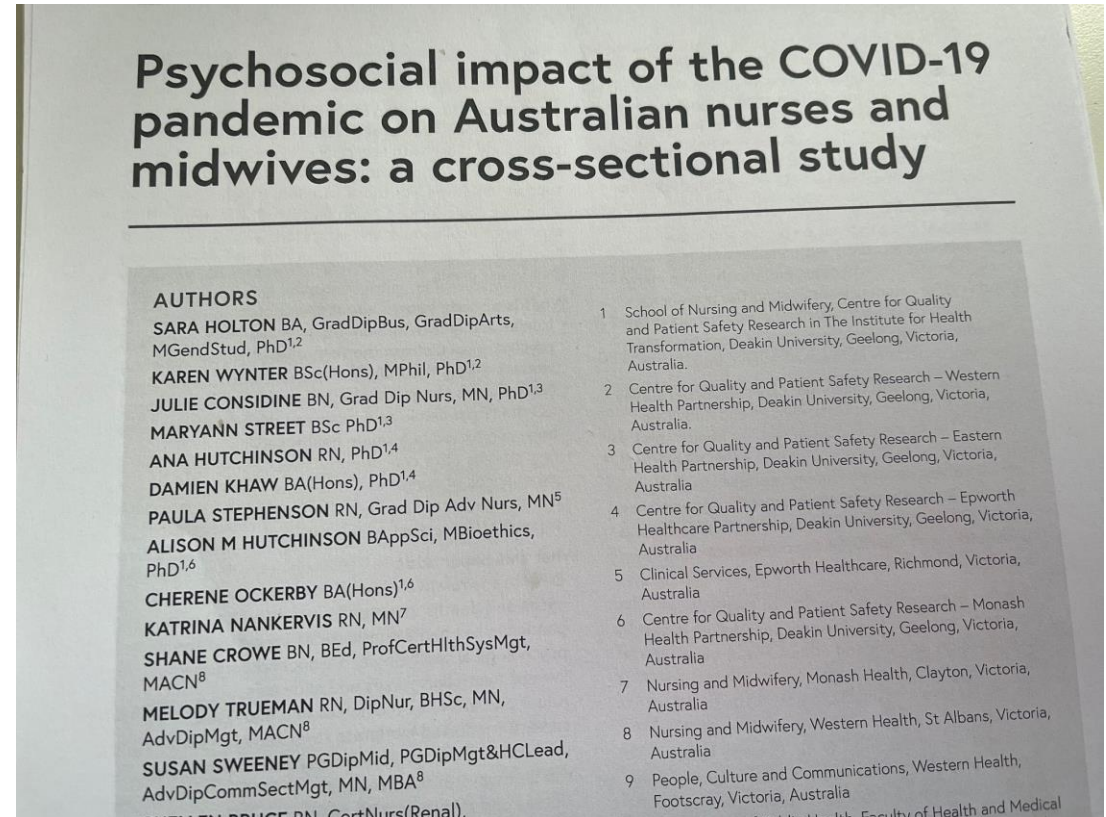
Common concerns and reported impacts

COVID-19 concerns and impacts



Psychosocial Impact of COVID-19 on Nurses and Midwives

- Holton, S., Wynter, K., Considine, J., Street, M., Hutchinson, A., Khaw, D., Stephenson, P., Hutchinson, A.M., Ockerby, C., Nankervis, K., Crowe, S., Trueman, M., Sweeney, S., Bruce, S. & Rasmussen, B. (2023) Psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australian nurses and midwives: a cross-sectional study. **Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing 40(1): 10.**



Third wave findings (Nov 2021 – January 2022)

- Holton, S., Rasmussen, B., Crowe, S., Truemann, M., Dabscheck, A. F., Booth, B.G., Hitch, D., Said, C.M., Haines, K.J. & Wynter, K. (2023) Worsening psychological wellbeing of Australian hospital clinical staff during three waves of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. **Australian Health Review:** October, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1071/AH23120>

The image shows the front cover of an article. At the top left is the CSIRO Publishing logo. At the top right is the journal title 'Australian Health Review' and the article DOI 'https://doi.org/10.1071/AH23120'. The title of the article is 'Worsening psychological wellbeing of Australian hospital clinical staff during three waves of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic'. Below the title are the authors' names and their qualifications: Sara Holton^{A,B,*}, Bodil Rasmussen^{A,B,C,D}, Shane Crowe^E, Melody Trueman^F, Adrian Dabscheck^F, Sarah Booth^G, Danielle Hitch^{G,H}, Catherine M. Said^{G,I,J}, Kimberley J. Haines^G, and Karen Wynter^{A,B}. Below the authors' names is the abstract, which starts with 'Objective. This study aimed to assess and compare the psychological wellbeing of Australian hospital clinical staff at three timepoints during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Methods. An anonymous, online, cross-sectional survey was conducted at three timepoints during the COVID-19 pandemic (T1: May–June 2020; T2: October–December 2020; T3: November 2021–January 2022). The surveys were completed by nurses, midwives, doctors and allied health staff employed at a large metropolitan tertiary health service located in Melbourne, Australia. The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) assessed respon-'. There is also a small box for correspondence information.

For full list of author affiliations and declarations see end of paper

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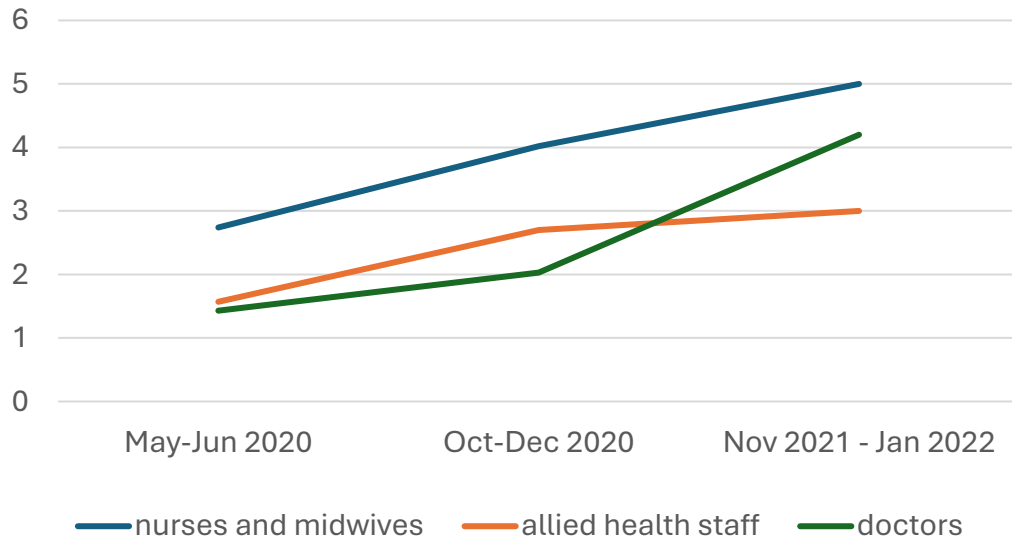
Psychological wellbeing, two time points

Western Health clinical staff (n=638, 358)

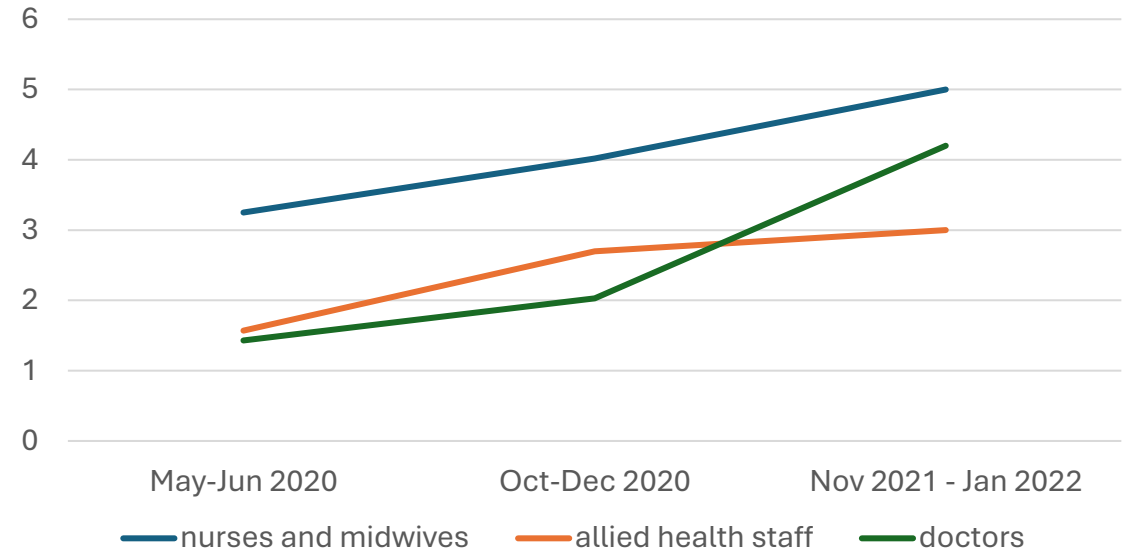
Three time points

Western Health clinical staff (n=668)

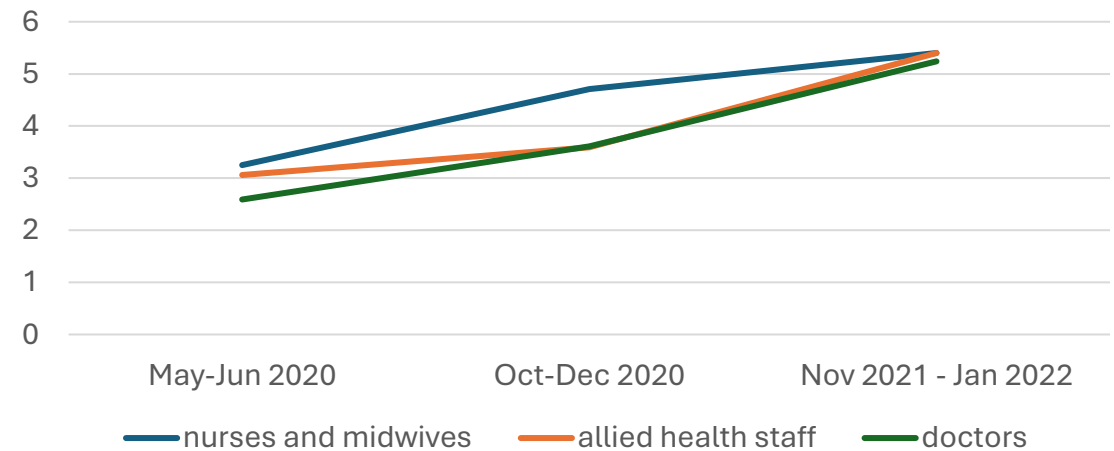
Anxiety



Depression



Stress



Mixed methods evaluation of Western Health wellbeing support initiatives

Communication:

- COVID-19 microsite
- CEO Staff briefings
- Wellbeing bulletins
- Wellbeing and COVID-19 information sheets
- Blogs – Executive and senior leadership teams

23,238 page views
Feb 2020 – Mar 2021

8,191 visits
March – July 2020

Psychological support & respite:

- Wellness and support hubs (quiet space, food, counsellors)
- Meditation (on-site)
- Peer support program EAP (including on-site support)
- Kindness Matters website
- Compassion champions

926 individual counselling sessions

61 critical incident debriefs
Mar 2020 – Dec 2020

Working from home policy



Mixed methods evaluation of wellbeing support initiatives at Western Health

Survey – staff (clinical and non-clinical) (n=907)

- 86% aware of initiatives
- 43% used initiatives, of whom
- 77% would recommend to colleagues
- Most common reason for not using was not enough time

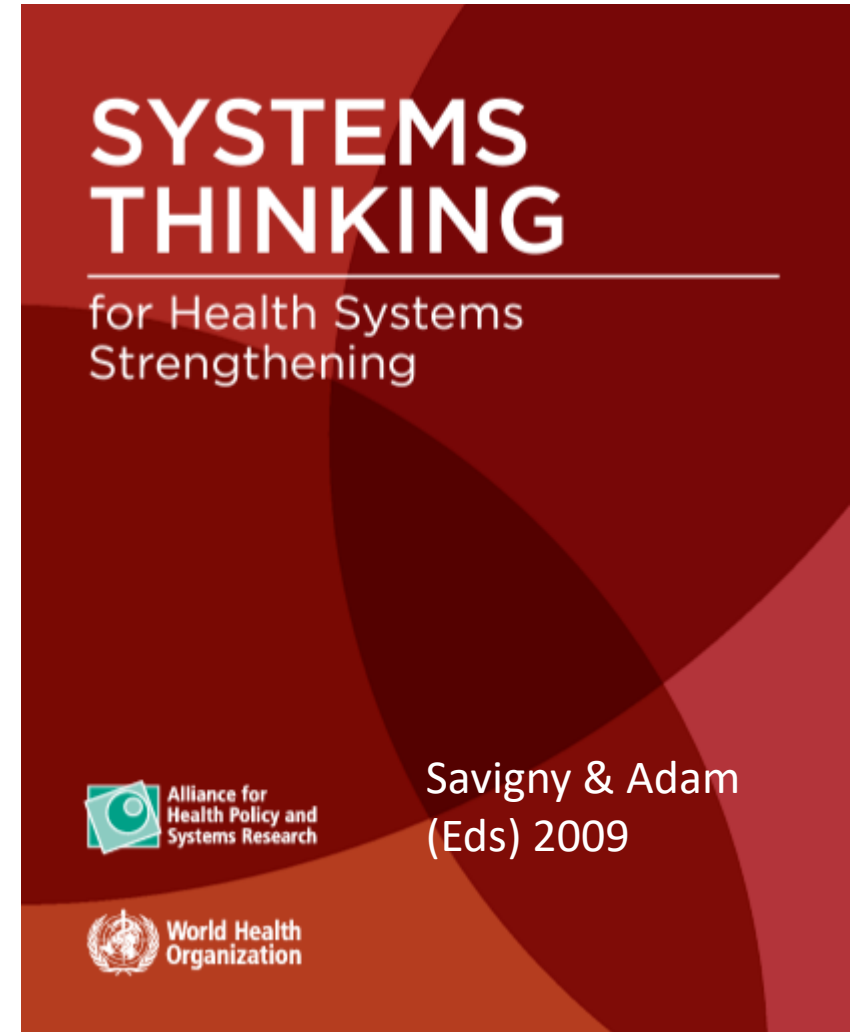
Interviews (7 staff, 3 key stakeholders)

“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 well being”. (Interview participant)

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

“Supporting and improving health workforce wellbeing and sustainability at Western Health”

- 3 facilitated co-design workshops
- 30 Western Health staff members (representing different levels and divisions)
- Purpose:
 - creating a diagram of interconnected drivers of poor psychological wellbeing among staff over the past 2 years
 - generating ideas for selection of priority areas and strategies to address
- Embraces rather than attempting to reduce the social and organisational complexity of the context.
- Thus more likely to be sustained even in complex environments.



Summary

- COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the personal and work lives of *many* healthcare workers.
- Psychological wellbeing declined as the pandemic has progressed.
- Lack of 'baseline' routine data on psychological wellbeing among clinical staff.
- A considerable proportion have experienced psychological distress during the pandemic
- Similar to other countries although fewer cases and deaths in Australia
- Risk of infection, increased workload, and stress at work – may have contributed to increased symptoms.
- Staff appreciate and utilise supports and communication (protective), but may benefit from further targeted (co-design) interventions

Acknowledgements

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