

MEDIA RELEASE

New Generation of Doctors Urged to End Workplace Bullying

A new generation of doctors will be urged to end bullying in the workplace in an address by Dr Sally Cockburn, GP and media personality, at the Australian Medical Students' Association National Convention today.

Dr Cockburn said that the practice of humiliation and harassment of students in some areas of medical teaching has to stop.

"I've had it with the silence on this issue. Change is long overdue and it's no longer valid to claim that 'It was good enough for me so it's ok for them'," she said.

"I am astounded to hear that a culture of fear still exists in medicine, amongst students and residents, and within more senior ranks, especially in the public hospital system. Many students and doctors are afraid to speak up about abuse for fear of career reprisals," she said.

Research suggests that this is the case in other countries. In a survey published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 46.4% of all respondents stated that they had been abused at some time while enrolled in medical school, with 80.6% of seniors reporting being abused by the senior year.

"We need to break the cycle of the abused medical student becoming abusive teacher. I am sure no one sets out to be a bully, but often, especially in clinical and postgraduate medical training, teaching is done by generous, busy clinicians who want to ensure the next generation knows their stuff. Unfortunately, not all these clinicians possess optimal teaching skills," Dr Cockburn said.

"Doctors need better training in how to teach effectively, students need to be given safe ways to speak up and post graduate clinical training needs to be more accountable," she said.

AMSA President Michael Bonning said that the issue was of utmost importance to the next generation of medical students as part of the Association's drive to ensure medical student health and wellbeing.

"The issue of bullying in the workplace is intimately linked with student wellbeing. To ensure the welfare of our students we must address this issue head on and in a timely manner," Mr Bonning said.

Dr Sally Cockburn will be available for interview today. The AMSA National Convention continues at the Sebel Hotel Albert Park today. Key sessions include;

- 10:20am Sports Medicine: Perspectives from both sides of the white line. Dr Greg Hoy, Dr Peter Larkins, Dr Peter Brukner, Mr Damien Fleming, Mr Michael Klim.
4:00pm Bullying in the workplace. Dr Sally Cockburn.

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