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## The prevalence and associations of psychological distress in Australian junior medical officers

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**Objective:** To determine the prevalence of psychological distress in Australian Junior Medical Officers (JMOs) and to investigate the determinants associated with psychological distress over a three-year (2014-2016) period.

**Methods:** JMOs were surveyed using the 2014-2016 JMO Census (n=220, 399 and 466 each year, response rate approximately 15%). Levels of psychological distress were assessed using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). A K10 $\geq$ 25 was chosen to indicate high psychological distress and this determinant was compared to various demographic and work-related factors.

**Table-1: CRUFAD & GPcare score groupings and categorization**

K10 SCORE	LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS
10-19	Are likely to be well
20-24	Are likely to have a mild mental disorder
25-29	Are likely to have a moderate mental disorder
30-50	Are likely to have a severe mental disorder

**Results:** Australian JMOs experience a high level of psychological distress (mean of 18.1, median 16.0). There were no differences in demographical variables such as age, sex, marital status, dependents and between PGY 1 and 2. Increasing hours worked per week was associated with a higher K10, with every hour worked increasing odds by 3%. Attitudinal items including feeling unwilling to study medicine again, feeling poorly trained and experiences of bullying were related to high psychological distress. Coping strategies like exercise and spending time with friends correlated positively with lower distress, whilst time off work, frequent alcohol use, smoking and drug use were associated with increased distress levels. 54.5% of those with a high K10 indicated that they did not use any form of professional support. 17.83% expressed that given their time again; they would not choose to study medicine.

**Conclusion:** A focused approach to JMO support and education regarding significant risk factors identified is likely to assist health policies that aim to improve the mental wellbeing of Australian JMOs.

## References

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## Biography

Michelle W Lau is a Resident Medical Officer and currently working at Nepean Hospital in New South Wales, Australia. She has keen interest in clinical governance and improvement in the welfare of junior doctors and doctors in training. Her area of interest is in the mental health and wellbeing of her fellow residents and interns, who are a high-risk group known for working long hours and manage high stress situations in the workplace.

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