
Domestic violence: exploring support for the health industry

8 May 2018

Health workers are often ill equipped to manage the complex issues that affect patients who have been subject to domestic violence. But very little work has been done to explore issues that affect health workers who are also victims.

The health implications of domestic violence when caring for patients as well as issues of education and awareness of domestic violence among health workers, will be discussed by Associate Professor Payal Mukherjee, Adult and Paediatric ENT Surgeon and deputy chair elect, RACS NSW state committee.

“We want to explore ways where victims can be supported to manage their training and still care for their patients with a more supportive work environment during times of such stress,” Associate Professor Mukherjee said.

Recommendations from the [2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence](#) were for health professionals to work collaboratively with other sectors to manage the health implications affecting victims. The highest burden of disease on women’s health in Australia is due to domestic violence which is higher than any other risk factors, over alcohol or smoking. This is far higher in the indigenous population and these health impacts are preventable.

“In addition, many other areas of industry are also addressing this in their workforce, but there is very little being done in health,” she said.

Due to the public health aspect of the workforce, the Australian Defence Force has radically addressed their workforce rules with respect to domestic violence, introducing mandatory reporting of intervention orders and restrictions on the carrying of firearms for those who have been reported.

Associate Professor Mukherjee will be chairing a session at 10.30am on Tuesday 8 May in a trauma session, titled “Injury Prevention - It is our responsibility” in the upcoming RACS Annual Scientific Congress in Sydney from 7 – 11 May. This will include a presentation by Port Macquarie obstetrics Trainee and victim of domestic violence and major trauma, Dr Angela Jay followed by a panel discussion that includes key leaders in policy, policing and surgery, joining together for the first time to discuss and develop solutions to solving this critical issue.

Panel members include Police Commissioner Michael Fuller, Past RACS Vice President and Paediatric Surgeon Professor Spencer Beasley, New South Wales Secretary of Health Ms Elizabeth Koff, Executive Ambassador Catalyst Australia Mr Troy Roderick and President of the American College of Surgeons Dr Barbara Bass.

For more information about the Annual Scientific Congress please visit: <https://asc.surgeons.org/>

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery,

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