



STRICTLY EMBARGOED: 00.01 HRS TUESDAY 22 MARCH

ALARMING NUMBERS OF DOCTORS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AS A RESULT OF WORK PRESSURES

A new survey, released today (22 March 2016) by the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (RMBF), highlights the overwhelming concern amongst doctors about the state of their mental health and wellbeing as a result of working under increasing pressure and scrutiny. The survey finds that 82% of doctors know of other doctors experiencing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Yet despite their need for support and advice, this 'insider knowledge' also revealed that doctors are unlikely to reach out for fear of discrimination or stigma from colleagues (84%), or are inhibited by their 'high achieving' personality traits (66%).

The survey, conducted amongst hospital doctors, consultants, GPs and charity supporters, also found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of doctors surveyed know of other doctors experiencing marital and family problems. Additionally, 78% of doctors believed that doctors are so busy looking after others that they neglect to look after themselves, and over 90% believe their working hours put personal relationships under pressure.

Survey respondents were also asked to identify the key factors contributing to the significant pressure on doctors today. The results indicated that:

- 80% say patient case loads are a key factor
- 80% say increased scrutiny (e.g. CQC inspections, pressure of revalidation) is a key factor
- 76% say working hours are a key factor

The survey was conducted by the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund, a charity which helps doctors, medical students and their families, as part of their new ***What's Up Doc?*** campaign. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the need to offer support to doctors throughout the UK who are currently working under increasing difficulty. Worryingly, of those doctors surveyed the majority (66%) felt

that the NHS provided a poor level of support to doctors and their families. As part of the campaign, the charity has developed a free downloadable online guide for professionals called *The Vital Signs*. Authored by Dr Richard Stevens, the guide highlights key pressure trigger points for doctors, and signposts organisations and support networks for those in need of help and advice.

Steve Crone, RMBF's Chief Executive, said:

"We are hoping that our new 'What's Up Doc?' campaign will raise awareness of the need to offer vital support to doctors and their dependents. After all, these are the professionals who work tirelessly to support us in our times of need. I would urge any doctor in difficulty to reach out – no one should feel too proud or ashamed to ask for help. Every year the RMBF supports hundreds of doctors and their families who are struggling with financial concerns, ill health or addiction, through no fault of their own. We would like even more people to know we are here to offer confidential help."

Dr Richard Stevens, a coach with the Thames Valley Professional Support Unit and author of *The Vital Signs* guide, added:

"The RMBF provides financial support, money advice and information when it is most needed due to age, ill health, disability or bereavement. The charity is supported by a network of 250+ volunteers who come from all areas of the medical profession to offer vital support to doctors and their families. Volunteers include Area Visitors, who visit beneficiaries at home, Medical Liaison Officers who ensure those in need hear about the charity, and PhoneFriends – a telephone befriending scheme. Please see our Doctor Support Network map to find a volunteer near you."

(<http://www.rmbf.org/pages/the-rmbf-doctor-support-network.html>)

The RMBF has been providing support to doctors and their families for 180 years. For more information, visit www.rmbf.org or download *The Vital Signs* guide at <http://www.rmbf.org/pages/the-vital-signs.html> (available from 22 March).

ENDS

For more information about the campaign please contact Lois Spall or Jo Gulliver at Trinity PR on tel: 020 7112 4905 mobile: 0770 948 7961 or email lois@trinitypr.co.uk or jo.gulliver@trinitypr.co.uk

Notes to editors

1. 1,351 doctors surveyed January 2016 via Survey Monkey including hospital doctors, GPs, consultants and charity supporters

Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (RMBF)

The RMBF is a charity helping doctors, medical students and their families in times of crisis. The charity provides financial support, money advice and information when it is most needed due to age, ill health, disability or bereavement. This help includes grants and loans as well as a telephone befriending scheme for those who may be isolated and in need of support. The RMBF boasts a 250+ strong volunteer network across the UK. The charity, which has been helping doctors for 180 years, doesn't receive any government funding and is solely supported by its fundraising efforts.