

Raising awareness one sock at a time

2 May 2024

It is time to don those happy socks again! This year's CrazySock4Docs (CS4D) campaign to raise awareness among the public of the mental health needs of the healthcare community is on Friday 7 June.

As the public, we take our healthcare providers for granted and often think they are “immune” to mental health issues. Yet they face immense pressure and strain – from the specialists, to our GPs, their receptionists who welcome us with a broad smile, up to those who ensure wards are clean and hygienic.

All of them are human too – and suffer from the same ailments as we, the public, do.

Of course, the same applies to medical students – those who are still preparing themselves for a life of service in the healthcare professions. And, of course, also their lecturers and all other staff on our healthcare campuses. The tragic death of the dean of the Medical Science's Faculty of the University of Cape Town in 2018, Professor Bongani Mayosi, emphasised this.

The mental strain on all involved in healthcare can be immense, and it is well-documented that levels of depression and mental fatigue are particularly high among professionals who dedicate their lives to the treatment of others. In fact, one [study](#) found that 30% of public primary healthcare doctors are living with moderate-to-severe depression. Another [study](#) found that around a third of South African medical students have suicidal thoughts, and that over 6% of medical students attempt suicide.

Committed to address these worrying statistics, the Ithemba Foundation – ithemba means hope in isiXhosa – started the CS4D campaign in South Africa in 2019. Its founder, Dr Geoff Toogood, started the campaign in 2017 in Australia to raise awareness and give moral support to healthcare professionals battling with mental health issues.

Ithemba wants you, the public, to show we #Care4OurCarers. So on Friday, 7 June, support your healthcare professionals by wearing mismatched, funky, colourful, absolutely silly socks.

And don't forget to post a sock selfie to your social media with the hashtag #CrazySocks4Docs to link it to Ithemba Foundation's #CS4D campaign – and tag Ithemba's Facebook page, IthembaFoundation1, and our Instagram page. On all our healthcare campuses students stand a chance to win R1 000 cash with their sock-selfies by posting them and then encouraging family and friends to “like” them. On each of the participating campuses the “sock-selfie” with the most likes will win its owner R1 000.

Says Professor Lizette Rabe, founder of the Ithemba Foundation and initiator of the campaign in South Africa with the blessings of Dr Toogood: “We need to erase the stigma of mental health that still persists – especially in order for those who care for us to also care for themselves. We need to make a difference and ensure that the problem of depression and anxiety – and suicide – that is so prevalent among healthcare professionals and healthcare students, is destigmatised.

“Part of making a difference is to encourage conversations about mental health and help reduce stigma. Wearing mis-matched socks may seem like a strange place to begin the conversation, but it is a visible show of support and to raise the subject. Let's all show we #Care4OurCarers.”

Issued by the [Ithemba Foundation](#), a non-profit entity aimed at raising awareness of depression and related illnesses as clinical, biological illnesses, and to support research.

For more information, contact ithembafoundation@mweb.co.za.

For help:

Lifeline: 0861 322 322

Find a psychologist or psychiatrist close to you: <https://mentalhealthsa.org.za/mental-health-service-providers/>

Sadag 24-hour helpline: 0800 456 789, 0800 567 567, or sms 31393

Childline: 116