

Media release  
11 October 2022

## Mental health and wellbeing – for clinicians and patients – key focus at rural doctor conference

Rural Medicine Australia 2022  
12-15 October 2022, Canberra  
<https://rma.acrrm.org.au>  
#RMA22

### World Mental Health Week 2022

The critical issue of mental health and wellbeing in the bush – both for rural health professionals and their patients – will be a significant focus of this year's Rural Medicine Australia conference (RMA22), and a timely one given World Mental Health Week is also underway this week.

Being held in Canberra, RMA22 starts in earnest on Thursday and will run until Saturday afternoon.

It is the major annual rural doctors' conference in Australia, and is convened by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA).



#### ACRRM President, Dr Sarah Chalmers (pictured left), said:

“Mental health and wellbeing is not only an important issue for rural communities, but also for the rural doctors and other health professionals who care for them.

“To reflect the importance of this, clinician and community wellbeing will be the focus of one of four major streams at RMA22 this week.

“The pressures brought about by the COVID pandemic have been felt throughout rural and remote Australia – by communities and their health professionals alike.

“But COVID has really just added to pressures that were already making an impact – things like rising house prices, unemployment and the growing burden of natural disasters.

“And for doctors and other rural health professionals, workforce shortages continue to take a toll.

“It is really timely that RMA22 is being held during World Mental Health Week, and we know the sessions on mental health and wellbeing at the conference will be very popular.”

#### RDAA President, Dr Megan Belot (pictured right), said:

“We are really pleased to be delivering sessions at RMA22 that will not only assist clinicians in meeting the mental health needs of their communities, but their own mental health and wellbeing too.

“Our dedicated stream on clinician and community wellbeing will highlight initiatives that support mental healthcare and other supports for clinicians and communities; share practical demonstrations and strategies for self-care; provide mental health upskilling for clinicians; and discuss ways to nurture a happy rural health workforce.

“We even have an RMA22 Wellness Centre that, in addition to other things, will be offering daily yoga sessions to delegates!

“In order to make rural healthcare sustainable, we need to ensure doctors and other health professionals are looking after their own wellbeing and not getting burnt out. This is very hard to do in situations where you may be one of only a few health professionals in town, but it is critical – and there are strategies that can assist.

“Our fervent hope is that, through RMA22, we can provide rural doctors with the tools to help them take control of their own wellbeing, while also assisting their colleagues and patients.”

**RMA22 will feature the following sessions or workshops (amongst others):**

- Mental Health Disorders Training for Rural Practitioners
- Better mental health from birth to twelve
- An outline of the Mental Health Training Standards 2023-25
- The Amazing RACE - The Riverland Academy of Clinical Excellence (RACE) is an innovative program established in regional South Australia to support junior doctors to make the Riverland home. Amongst other things, RACE promotes a healthy work/life balance.
- Practical tips for effecting behavioural change, both in others and yourself
- Respectful workplaces forum
- Everyone’s health – empowering rural community engagement
- Culturally safe care
- Wellbeing and self-care for GP Supervisors
- Common sources of conflict in GP training
- Clinicians and community together – Flood Disaster Management 101
- Working safe in rural communities

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Media are welcome to attend most sessions at RMA22, but must pre-register in advance by contacting one of the RMA Media Team on the contact numbers below.

**Find the full program for RMA22 by clicking here:**

<https://bit.ly/3d73ksG>

**Find the full keynote speaker list for RMA22 by clicking here:**

<https://rma.acrrm.org.au/program/speakers>

**A high resolution photo of Dr Megan Belot can be found here:**

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2139>

**A high resolution photo of Dr Sarah Chalmers can be found here:**

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/1291>

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