



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Health Sciences



HEALTHCARE WORKERS
CARE NETWORK

Caring for the Carers by the Carers

UP and Healthcare Workers Care Network sign MOU to Tackle Mental Health

The University Of Pretoria (UP) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Healthcare Workers Care Network to help tackle mental health challenges that affect health care practitioners. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth many challenges pertaining to the health and well-being of healthcare workers' and more specifically, nurses on the frontline.

The World Health Organization, declared 2020 the Year of the Nurse and Midwife with the intent of bringing awareness to the profound impact that nurses and midwives have in the lives of the public. No one could have predicted the current state of events in 2020 and the impact that nurses would have in helping the country curb the coronavirus.

Nurses represent the largest component of the healthcare workforce dealing with COVID-19 patients, and they are finding themselves in the most extreme circumstances where the nature of caring has changed. "Mental health sequelae from experiences of epidemics constitute an 'emergency within an emergency'. As nurses, we are expected to hold the fort, but we need to recognise how important it is to preserve our mental health and avoid psychological trauma" said Dr Tanya Heyns, Associate Professor at the Department of Nursing Science.

The [Healthcare Workers Care Network \(HWCN\)](#) is a nationwide healthcare worker support network which offers all healthcare workers across the public and private sectors free support, pro bono therapy, resources, training and psychoeducation. The HWCN already has over 500 volunteer mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, GPs, registered counsellors, and social workers, who will provide help, intervention, and support to all healthcare workers. These include doctors, nurses, community healthcare workers, field workers, hospital or clinic personnel, including hospital laundry staff, and porters.

The [Faculty of Health Sciences](#) looks forward to collaborating with the Healthcare Workers Care Network shared Prof Tiaan de Jager, Dean at the Faculty of Health Sciences. "This collaboration will not only assist the nursing fraternity but other health care workers by providing psychological and educational support while also creating more opportunities to conduct research that matters. I encourage every frontline worker to prioritise their mental health and use the network at their disposal" he added.

"South Africa's healthcare workers are under enormous pressure," says Dr Antoinette Miric, a Johannesburg-based psychiatrist and SASOP spokesperson. "They are committed to fighting this disease and saving as many lives as possible, all while managing their personal risks and anxieties around the virus and its impact on their own lives and their loved ones. We hope our collaboration with UP ensure that more healthcare workers combat mental health challenges."

To access Healthcare Workers Care Network Support Services:

- 24-hour Healthcare Workers Care Network Helpline – 0800 21 21 21 (available seven days a week)
- SMS 43001
- Website www.healthcareworkerscarenetwork.org.za – fill in the online form on the homepage to request individual therapy and support
- Online requests for support and counselling are accessible through the website, the [SAMA page](#), the [EMGuidance App](#) as well as the [Vulamobile App](#)