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Unified Call to Foster Healthy Workplace Cultures to Sustain the Health Workforce

Shortages in the oncology workforce are occurring as the incidence of cancer and the demand for cancer care increases with rising levels of burnout being a contributing factor. This is a global problem, and it is not confined to cancer, with the World Health Organization projecting a shortfall of 11 million health professionals worldwide by 2030.

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA), and European Cancer Organisation (ECO) are using their collective voices to highlight and address the challenges impacting the health workforce in an ASCO-COSA-ECO joint statement published in *Lancet Oncology*. The statement outlines four principles for creating and sustaining healthy workplace cultures and urges healthcare institutions to start operationalising these principles through concrete measurable steps.

COSA President, Professor Sabe Sabesan said, “The joint statement builds on foundational work from the three organisations – ASCO’s strategic goal to foster a sustainable work environment, ECO’s pan-European workforce campaign, and our own innovative healthy workplace culture framework.”

“COSA’s aim was to develop a framework that includes contemporary workforce elements such as diversity, inclusion and consensus decision making and that aligns values and purpose across all layers of the system. We know great cancer care relies on a healthy whole-of-system culture because of its integrated nature.”

“We incorporated a system model into the framework to make it tangible and easily understood. The model uses an analogy of the popular dish of lasagne.”

“Our collective goal is to engender organisations to create healthy workplace cultures, and foster engaged, inclusive, and productive workforces that provide high quality care to patients,” said Professor Sabesan.

The principles for creating and sustaining healthy workplace cultures are derived from the COSA framework and are relevant to the broad range of organisations working in health systems including care settings, research and educational institutions, professional and advocacy organisations, and government agencies.

The four interconnected principles for healthy workplace cultures are:

1. **Commit to Healthy Workplace Cultures:** Embed wellbeing into your organisation's mission and strategic plans by setting reasonable workloads and tracking wellness metrics at the highest levels.
2. **Promote Team-Based Cultures:** Foster high-performing, multidisciplinary teams to reduce stress and improve both employee satisfaction and patient care.
3. **Involve All Team Members in Designing Solutions:** Engage clinical teams in identifying problems and co-designing solutions to ensure interventions are effective and empower staff.
4. **Assess, Monitor, and Evaluate Progress:** Use regular assessments and surveys to measure team function and individual well-being, holding leadership accountable for continuous improvement.

[Read the full statement in *Lancet Oncology*.](#)

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About COSA

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) is Australia's peak multidisciplinary society for health professionals working in cancer research, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. COSA is recognised as an activist organisation whose views are valued in all aspects of cancer care. We are allied with and provide high-level clinical advice to Cancer Council Australia.

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