



Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science  
Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical

# Mental Health Issues in the Medical Laboratory Profession: Unifying a Profession in Support and Voice



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[scslm.org](http://scslm.org)

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# Who are we

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is a not-for-profit organization. It is the national certifying body and professional society for medical laboratory technologists (MLT) and medical laboratory assistants (MLA).



Medical  
Laboratory  
Technologists



Medical  
Laboratory  
Assistants



Clinical  
Genetics  
Technologists



Cytotechnologists

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- 1.2 million lab tests performed daily in Canada
- Completed by qualified and skilled medical laboratory professionals (MLPs)
- Approx. 70% of all decisions regarding a patient's diagnosis and treatment, hospital admission and discharge are based on laboratory test results.



500

Cases of cancer  
diagnosed every day



70,000

Heart attacks occur in  
Canada each year



2,000

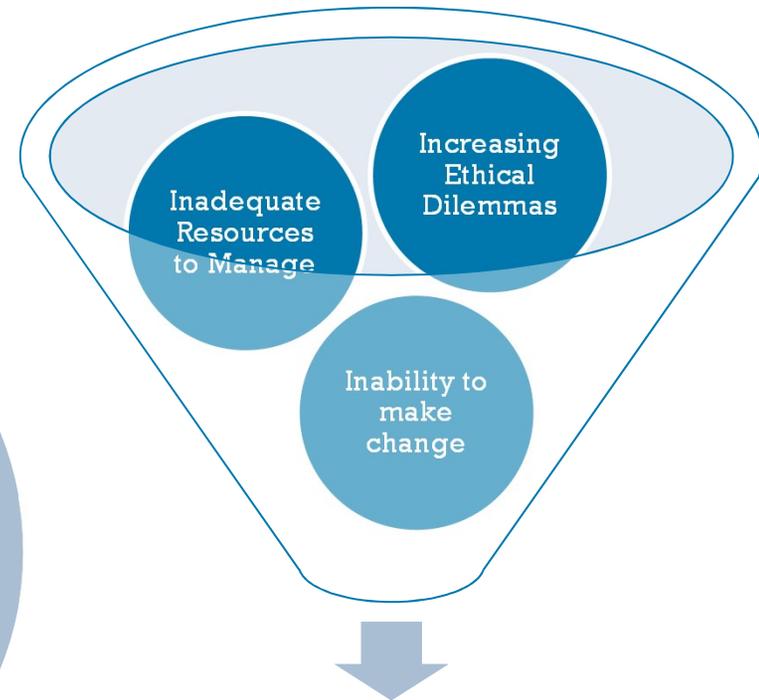
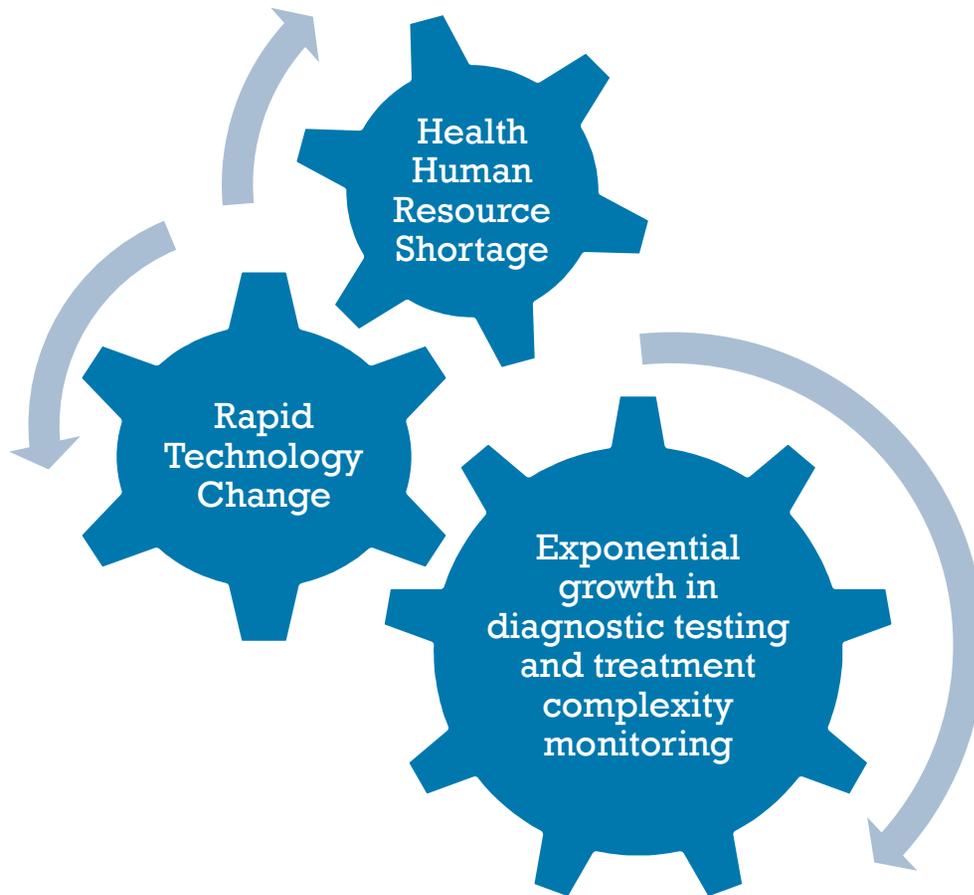
Units of donated blood  
are needed everyday



14,000

Traumas occur every day

# Climate Change



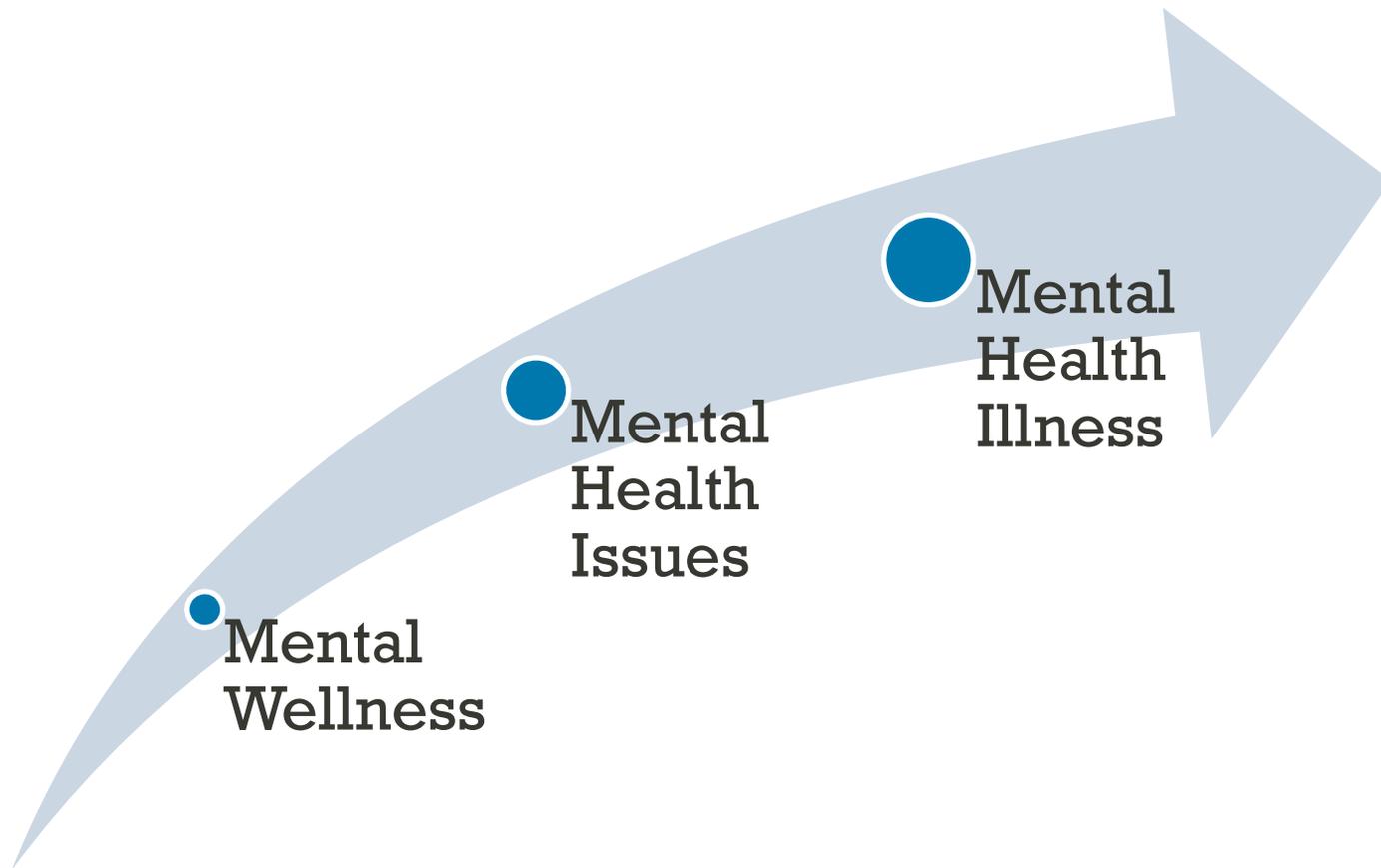
**Mental Health Impacted**

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Zychla L. (2016). "Climate Change: Drivers of the Higher Medical Laboratory Professional Standard in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Medical Laboratory Science*, 78(1), pp.9-12.

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# Across the Spectrum



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**Bimodal Mental Health  
Model**

**Traditional Model**



**Person-Centered Model**

Advocacy and Awareness

Policy

Toolkit

Quantitative  
Data

Qualitative  
Data

Code of Ethics

Guidance  
Documentation

Standards of  
Practice

Code of  
Professional  
Practice

Traditional Model



Person-Centered Model

**Policy Changes  
& Additions**

**Mental Health  
Toolkit**

**National Mental  
Health Survey**

**Online Focus  
Group**

**Code of Ethics**

**Guidance  
Document**



# Underlying Principles

- This ain't the rodeo
  - **Evidence based change is required**
- “Nothing about me, without me.”<sup>1</sup>
  - **It's not just about the patients; it's about who is supporting them as well**
- Ying must have yang to tell a complete story
- Story telling is imperative
  - **It should not be considered 'less' in any manner**
- Our goal should be pie in the sky

# Code of Ethics and Guidance Document



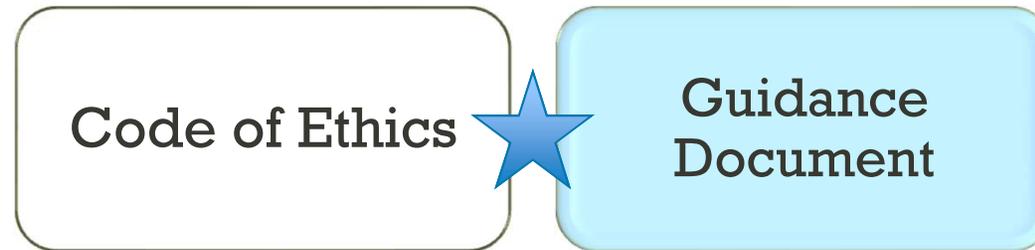


- Grounded in research principles
- 21 codes of ethics were reviewed (exhaustive search), thematically coded, and validated for the profession
  - **Be broad: Canadian and international**
  - **Be bold: MLP and non-MLP specific**
  - **Be wise: Other comparators such as mission statements, core organizational values, Code of Professional Conduct**



- Multistage validation process with...
  - **Experts: Ethics Working Group**
  - **Key Stakeholders: Presentation and information gathering at national meetings**
    - LABCON 2014-16
    - Ethics Think Tank
  - **Future Users: Survey to all members**

Respectable  
Compassionate  
Protocols Complicated  
Genuine **Accountable** Responsible  
Supportive **Empathy** Confidential  
Committed **Justice** **Trustworthy**  
Rights Vocal **Integrity**  
Respect  
Maturity **Fair** Privacy  
Morals **Value** Dignity **Honest**  
Inherent **Conscientious**  
Knowledgeable  
Multifaceted



- The code companion is the guidance document and ethics course
  - **Grounding principles**
  - **Fact sheet**
  - **Principles of bioethics**
  - **Glossary**
  - **FAQ**
  - **Resolution model**
  - **Case scenarios**
  - **Examples in the media**
  - **Discussion board**

National Mental Health Survey  
and  
Online Focus Group





National Mental  
Health Survey



Online Focus  
Group

- **Purpose:** Nation wide member survey for MLPs to identify mental health issues and illness levels, and quality of work life
  - **Full spectrum of wellbeing to illness examined**
  - **Targeted QofW questions**
- Thermometer of mental health in the workplace to be compared against in future

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National Mental  
Health Survey

Online Focus  
Group

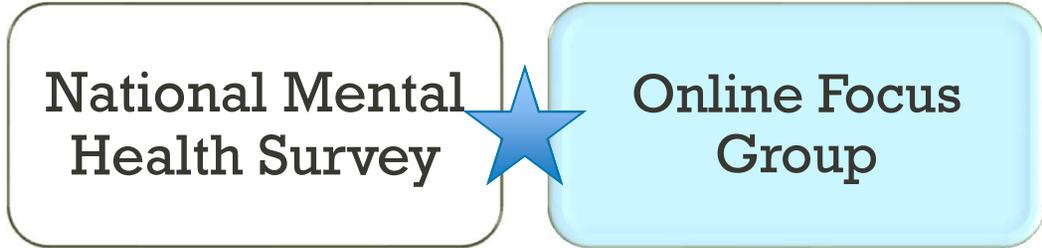
- N=998, diverse group of CSMLS members
- Full range of mental health represented
  - **NIOSH QofW specific questions & stress**
  - **Maslach Burnout Inventory**
  - **Kessler-6 (psychological distress, ability to discriminate serious mental illness)**
  - **RAND Mental Health Inventory (anxiety, depression, behavioral control & positive affect)**
- Analysis currently being completed



National Mental  
Health Survey

Online Focus  
Group

- Of the 12% identified with severe mental health illness (K6) and were working, 61% had not seen a doctor or other health professional about these feelings in last 30 days.
- 57% 'did not know' or were 'unsure' if they had access to stress management or stress reduction programs at workplace.
  - **35% of these individuals felt stress 'always' or 'often'.**
- 52% said there were not enough people or staff to get all the work done 'often'.
  - **31% of these individuals are 'not at all likely' to find a new job in the next year.**
- 24% said they felt discriminated against in the workplace.



National Mental  
Health Survey

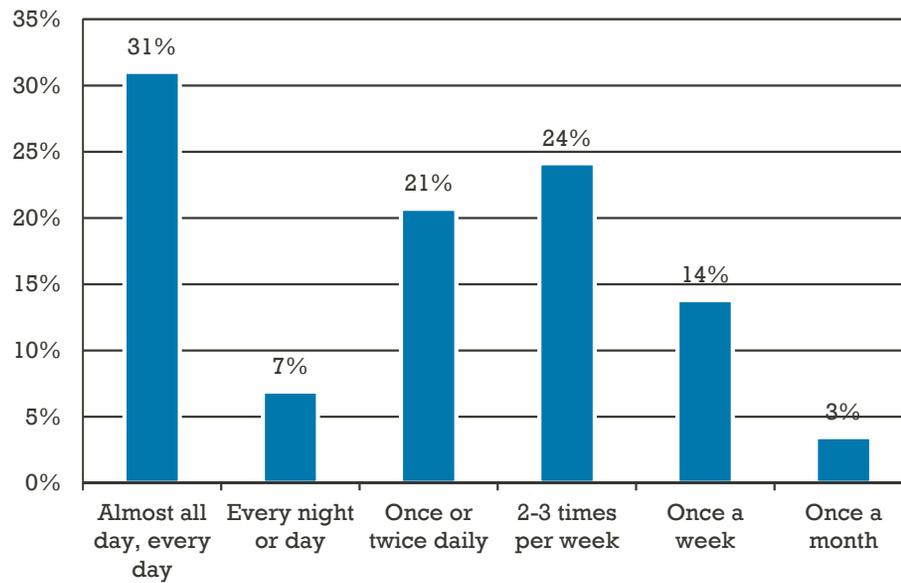
Online Focus  
Group

- Purpose: To examine mental health in story format using an online focus group methodology
  - **asynchronous discussion**
- 3 Days, each day new set of questions
  - **Between Days: individual, organization, profession**
  - **Within Day: issue, cause, solution**
- N = 29; Participation Rate Day 1=100%, Day 2= 93%, Day 3 = 62%

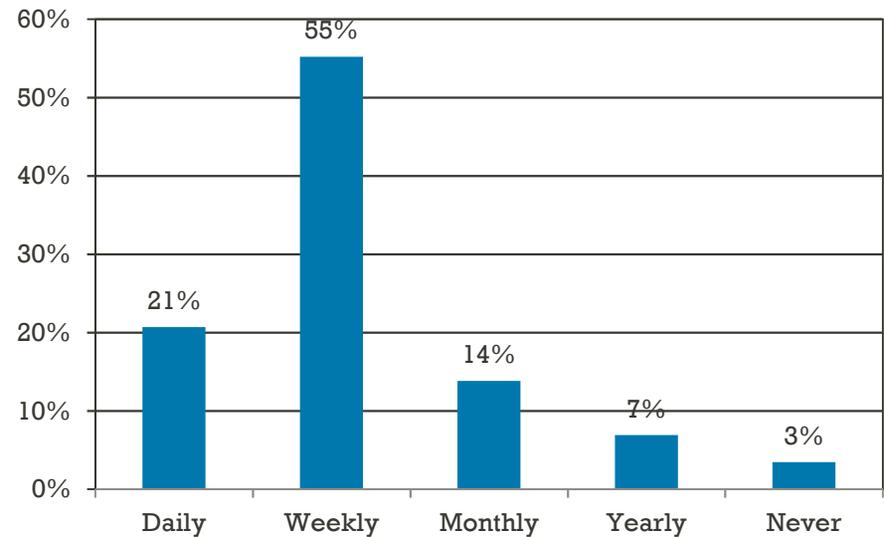
National Mental Health Survey

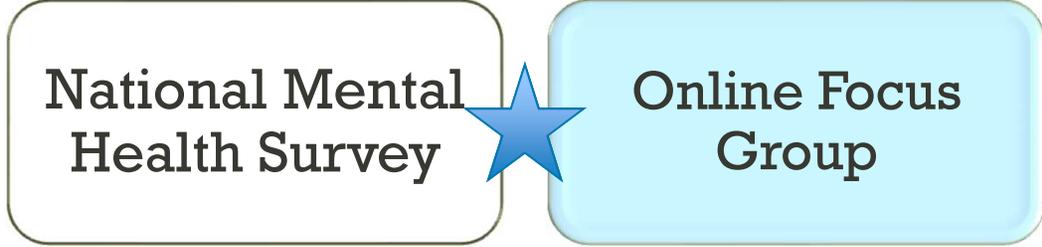
Online Focus Group

**How often do you experience the highest level of stress at work?**



**How often do you feel burned out because of work?**





National Mental  
Health Survey

Online Focus  
Group

- Root Cause of Workplace Stressors
  - Inadequate staffing
  - Increased Workload
  - Management Issues
  - Coworker Issues
  - Inadequate Equipment
  - Lack of Public Recognition
- High level grouping is only a portion of the story...



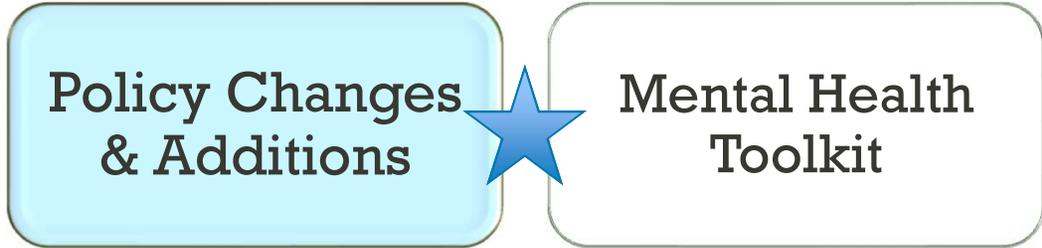
**Reminder of why we did this....**

***“There is a better culture of mental illness and issues about anxiety and depression in most workplaces however hospitals seem to be falling behind in this regard. They say the right things and post the right posters but when push comes to shove the stigma is still there. If someone does take a stress leave, they are never treated the same.”***

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# Policy and Mental Health Toolkit





**Policy Changes  
& Additions**

**Mental Health  
Toolkit**

- Policy additions and changes support culture change, internally and externally, for healthy work environments
- Creation of a Whistle Blower position statement
- Updating QofW position statement
  - **The CSMLS considers the mental health and psychological safety of medical laboratory professionals to be as important as other aspects of health and safety.**
- Diversity position statement
- Organization recognition of mental health awareness campaign(s)
  - **Launch toolkit on WHO Mental Health Day**



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# ARE YOU MENTALLY HEALTHY?

**One in five Canadians** will have a clinically defined mental illness in their lifetime. CSMLS has compiled a Mental Health Toolkit that empowers employees, employers, and organizations to **take charge** and **make positive change** within the medical laboratory profession.

Take charge of your life



I am an Individual

- > What is Mental Health and Mental Illness?
- > What is Stress and Burnout?
- > How Stressed Am I?
- > Is my Reaction out of Balance?
- > I Want to Know What Other People Experience
- > Taking Steps to Manage Stress

I am an Employee

- > Professional Code of Conduct Resolution Process
- > Difficult Conversations
- > Bullying
- > Stigma

I am a Manager

- > Management Style
- > Psychological Health & Safety
- > Managing Mental Health Issues
- > Mental Health First Aid
- > Bell's Let's Talk Conversation Guide

I am an Organization

- > Senior Leadership
- > Mental Health Framework for an Organization
- > Employee Assistance Programs

∨ I am an Individual ∨

# Website Structure

## Employee – Understanding Me as a Person

- What is Mental Health and Mental Illness?
- What is Stress and Burnout?
- Mental Health Theories and Research
- How Stressed Am I? Identify it! Is my Reaction out of Balance?
- I Want to Know What Other People Experience
- CSMLS Mental Health Stories
- Taking Steps to Manage your Mental Health

against mental health issues in the workplace.

## Management Quiz

**1. I am concerned about whether staff members have enough time to get their work done within regular working hours.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

**2. I act as a workload coach to my staff by assisting them to prioritize their work.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

**3. My staff would agree that I try to ensure they are able to accomplish their work within regular working hours.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

**4. I consider it important to involve my staff in decisions and changes that affect their work.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

**5. I consult with my staff on decisions and changes that affect their work.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

**6. My staff would agree that I consult with them on decisions and changes which affect their work.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

**7. I consider it important that the amount of mental and emotional effort required by my staff to do their work is reasonable.**

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Never

# Content Link Examples

- [Manage Stress Workbook](#)
- [Mental Health Videos](#)
- [Stress Index](#)
- [My Meal Planner](#)
- [Health Break Activities](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Questionnaire](#)
- [Managing Emotions Skills Assessment for Managers](#)
- [Guarding Minds @ Work](#)
- [Business Case for a Health Workplace](#)

# Points to Remember

- Mental health in the workplace needs to move beyond traditional methods to be inclusive of a person-centred focus
  - **Go beyond “mental health” to indirect areas such as ethics and whistle blowing**
- Change does not come without evidence based work to prove a need across time and the impact of initiatives
  - **Mental health should replicate medical health in some ways**
- Unifying a professional voice means obtaining the language for this in a multitude of ways
  - **Take lessons from patient centric models**
  - **Quantitative and qualitative**



## Points to Remember

Thank your medical laboratory professionals and other health professionals.

Kindness goes a long way to improving mental health in the workplace.

They deserve it!

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