



18th August 2024

Senate submission: AAAHC – antisemitism in the medical sector, pertaining to Victorian medical schools

The AAAHC (Alliance Against Antisemitism in Healthcare) was formed in early 2024 as a result of the rising antisemitism occurring both generally and in the medical workplace. A group of doctors formed the group to counter the increased use of the medical workplace as a forum for politics and activism, and the associated parallel increase in antisemitism incidences.

Antisemitism is often referred to as the oldest hatred. Contemporary antisemitism is not about hatred of the Jewish religion but is an attack on Jewish people simply for being Jewish. Unlike other systemic bigotries, which are typically fairly static, Jewish safety can change rapidly. Historically there are many examples of Jews living safely and thriving in a society, only for this status to shift rapidly, leading to systemic violence and even expulsions. Throughout Jewish history, skin colour and status have not guaranteed safety in any society.

It has been demonstrated that whenever there is a flare in hostilities in the Middle East, the incidence of attacks upon Jews also spikes. In the aftermath of October 7th, we have seen a spike in antisemitic incidences. There was a 738% increase in October and November 2023 compared with the previous year, on a background of a steady increase over the past decade. This spike started on October 8th, before Israel had even responded, as was demonstrated on the steps of the Sydney Opera House on October 9th. We are concerned by the normalisation of antisemitism in society, the lack of acknowledgment and shockingly, even condoning the events of October 7th, the silencing, demoralisation and dehumanisation of the Jewish people and the erasure of their connection to their homeland.

The results of our survey confirm this. The survey shows an overwhelming majority of Jewish doctors and health workers are concerned about antisemitism in the workplace, some even concealing their identity. A significant proportion have experienced antisemitism at work and the majority know of people who have experienced issues firsthand. Of concern, some have not escalated this, being either unable or unwilling for various reasons. The issue seems to be more pronounced in the public hospital system, and amongst junior doctors, medical students and allied health, most likely due to the loci of power.

We have also increasingly seen the use of the Gaza conflict as a teaching point in medical school events. Some professors in their position of power, have highlighted the conflict in a biased and one-sided manner, spreading mistruths and incorrect statements (such as accusing Israel of being an apartheid state and of perpetrating a genocide, despite the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Israel to be Hamas's stated aim), whilst ignoring the many other world conflicts.

DEI and anti-Jewish discrimination

DEI has become an integral part of all professional interactions, including within the medical workplace. Everyone should feel comfortable within their workplace; this includes members of minority groups. Jewish identity and antisemitism must become structurally ingrained into all DEI resources and education. Similarly, anti-Muslim sentiment must not be tolerated. Judaism is not solely a religion; it is an ethnic identity and grouping and should be recognised as such. We would



encourage the adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism by all medical institutions, and this should be mandated in our public hospitals.

Issues to be addressed

We believe that the guidelines in place to ensure everyone is free to come to work and not fear discrimination bullying are not working. The scope of cultural safety system that is in place, with the compulsory modules most of us need to take must be widened as currently, there is no mention of antisemitism. We know from the survey that the system is failing many Jewish doctors, who are not being treated equally; specifically, the inclusion aspect of DEI is not inclusive of Jews.

We believe there needs to be more specific guidelines from our medical associations, hospitals and medical schools on behaviour in the workplace and learning environment. There needs to be education on what antisemitism is and the forms it may take, and an understanding that there can be zero tolerance of it, along with any behaviour that singles out a minority group. These concerns relate to both workers in our medical facilities, and also to patients, some of whom are fearful to reveal their identity. Specifically, the inappropriateness of political displays in the workplace needs to be addressed.

There has been a general lack of leadership within the hospitals and universities, with most not acknowledging the suffering by both sides of the conflict. In several cases, CEOs have only commented about the Palestinian situation, without mentioning October 7th, or any Israeli suffering, with the knock-on effects on the Jewish community. Some hospitals signed statements condemning antisemitism, and others have refused. Doctors that have tried to address these issues as individuals or within groups have become despondent and fatigued, due to lack of acknowledgment and action. Some universities failed to tackle the illegal campus encampments at all, and allowed the harassment and vilification of Jewish and Israeli students to continue unopposed by the security staff that should be there to ensure the safety of all students

Antisemitism in the Medical workplace - survey of Jewish healthcare workers and students

Almost half of the 265 healthcare workers and students who responded to their survey said they felt the need to hide their Jewish identities in the workplace. A third had themselves experienced antisemitism in the workplace, with almost two thirds of these feeling that it was unsafe or uncomfortable to escalate this to a complaint. We are very aware of the power dynamics within medicine, with students and junior doctors fearful to speak out against their senior colleagues for fear of repercussions on their ability to pass attachments and for the repercussions on their long-term career path in medicine, both in passing medical school attachments and on their long-term specialist career path in medicine.

Examples of anti-Semitism in the medical schools and medical faculties

1) The Melbourne Medical Doctor Student Conference - the “MD Student Conference” “Medicine Past, Present and Future” June 24-27th 2024, Marvel Stadium

From the website: “The MD Student conference is a core university subject of the Doctor of Medicine (MD) Program at the Melbourne Medical School”

Jewish medical students have been targeted by Pro Palestine advocates including in university sanctioned lectures. The Keynote Lecture on day 3 of this 4-day event, titled “Doctors as Global Advocates: Promoting Peace, Humanitarianism, and Public Health” included guest speaker, Dr Margaret Beavis, who has a strong Pro Palestine and Anti-Israel presence on X (formerly Twitter).



Dr Beavis used the MD student conference platform to promote these views. Jewish medical students were left confused, uncomfortable and scared with multiple complaints made to 5A. The impression is that the speaker was specifically chosen due to and to express her anti-Israel views and the university did not perform adequate due diligence in protecting the Jewish students.

2) Australian and New Zealand Doctors For Palestine Facebook Group have been conspiring to place Pro-Palestine and divisive content on generic Medical Facebook Groups including the Australian Medical Mums Facebook Group and despite requests from Jewish members to remove the content, this content has been allowed to remain and be propagated on these sites with Jewish members either being silenced and removed from the sites or remaining quiet.

3) Weaponisation of the complaint's infrastructure

The complaints processes in medical institutions, national bodies and the national medical regulator has been weaponised by medical members of Pro Palestine medical groups including the Australian and NZ Doctors for Palestine Facebook Group. These group have targeted Jewish doctors and formulated complaints which include their social media responses. In one instance a senior clinician at a Tertiary Centre was reported to the Human Resource Department of that institution and underwent a formal HR investigation for predominantly comments made to support his Jewish colleagues and request to remove divisive content on generic medical social media sites

4) Online incitement and spreading of false propaganda

i. Social media postings by Monash University medical student



Date: 13/03/2024
Posted by: [REDACTED]
The text in English: "A very typical zio, exuding evil and hatred from every pore"
What the text means: [REDACTED] is mis-defining an internet troll as a "typical zio", meaning Zionist. [REDACTED] continues to mis-define Zionism inciting hate.

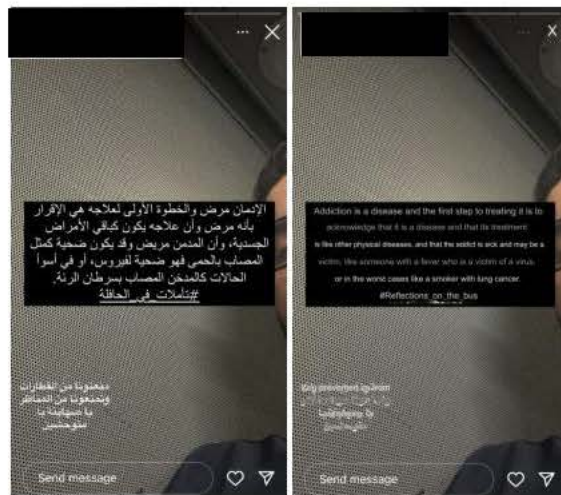


Date: 15/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "buses replaces trains It is a phrase that feels like a Zionist invented..."

What the images means: incitement of hatred towards Zionists



Date: 15/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "You prevented us from trains and prevented us from sightseeing O Zionists"

What the images means: incitement of hatred towards Zionists



Date: 15/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "Zionism is like Nazis. They were built on the same principle ..."

What the images means: incitement of hatred towards Zionists



Date: 15/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "The Nazi Propaganda Ministry was promoting... Its various media means that the Aryan race is the supreme race, and the rest of the races are second-class, and that other races such as the Jews and the Russians are subhumans (subhumans), until they promoted that the Jews are just rats, and today Zionism promotes that the Palestinians are human animals and barbarians in order to instill in the subconscious of the peoples that killing them it does not amount to killing any animal. #Reflections_on_the_train"

What the images means: incitement of hatred towards Zionists via holocaust inversion



Date: 25/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshot of video posted on Instagram reel containing quote; ""

Link to video:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8klOUJ9F6/?igsh=M2NmbnY5cmdyM2Mz>

What the video means:

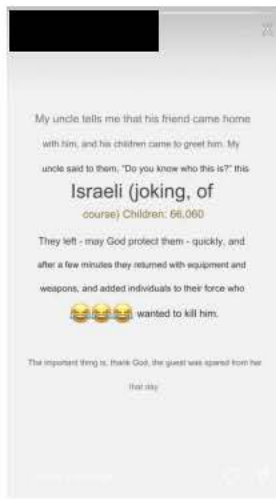


Date: 18/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "By any means necessary"

What the image means: The statement in combination with a cartoon of a person holding a rifle is incitement for violence



Date: 08/03/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "My uncle tells me that his friend came home with him, and his children came to greet him. My uncle said to them, "Do you know who this is?" this Israeli (joking, of course) Children: 66,060 They left - may God protect them - quickly, and after a few minutes they returned with equipment and weapons, and added individuals to their force who wanted to kill him. The important thing is, thank God, the guest was spared from her that day"

What the text means: The text is insinuating death and violence to Israelis, inciting hate and violence.



Date: 10/03/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "The right can only be taken away by force and weapons, and every right seeker should not wait for a mirage of international powers that have practiced oppressing peoples and enslaving nations. The international community has outdated laws that protect injustice, oppression and aggression under the influence of oppressive and oppressive powers."

What the text means: Incitement for violence

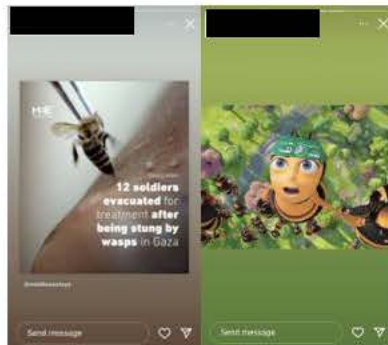


Date: 20/05/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Description of images: An image of the Israeli flag being set alight during a protest, followed by calls to attend rallies and protests

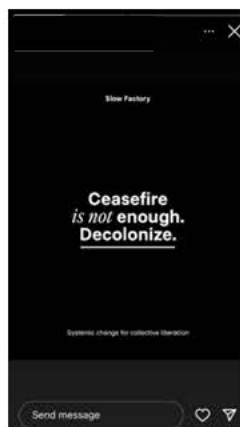
What the images mean: The sequence of posts is incitement for hate, violence and destructive protest.



Date: 12/5/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

What the images means: [REDACTED] is posting images of the Hamas logo over a cartoon of a bee after posting allegations of IDF soldiers getting stung by wasps. The use of the Hamas logo in the image provided is a clear alignment and approval of Hamas. Aligning oneself with Hamas is a clear act of hatred and antisemitism. In addition, these images are promoting and approving the actions of a prescribed terrorist organisation.



Date: 28/05/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: Ceasefire is not enough. Decolonise.

What the image means: The statement is declaring that a ceasefire is not satisfactory, and that Israel should not exist. This is a violent call to action for the annihilation of the state of Israel, justifying war and violence directed at Israel and its people.



Date: 11/03/2024

Posted by:

The text in English: "O God, in whose hand is the dominion of all things, and in whose possession are the treasures of all things, O in whose possession is what is in the heavens and what is on the earth and what is between them and what is under the earth, unite the hearts of the believers and grant victory to your striving servants. Almoravids in Gaza and Palestine. Oh God, grant them victory over their enemies, strengthen them, and make them steadfast, O Lord of glory and honor. Oh God, unite them, unite their world, make their call known, strengthen their strength, raise their banner, and let down their enemy, O Lord of glory and honor. Oh God, protect your enemies, the enemies of Islam, wherever they are.

Oh God, take care of your enemies, the enemies of Islam, wherever they may be. Oh God, take care of your enemies, the enemies of Islam, wherever they may be. Oh God, have mercy on the Jews and those who follow them and support them. Our Lord, destroy their wealth and harden their hearts. Oh God, we put you in their throats and we seek refuge in You from their evils. Oh God, turn away from us their plots, and limit their control, and remove from your land their authority, and do not allow them a way over any of your faithful servants. Oh God, disperse them, divide them, cut off their ties, and leave no survivors for them, come between them and what they desire, and do to them as you did to their followers before.

O God, bestow Your best blessings upon our Prophet Muhammad, Your servant, Your Prophet, and Your Messenger, Muhammad, and his family and companions, and grant him peace, and increase his honor and honour, and send him down to the house that is closest to You on the Day of Resurrection. Glory be to your Lord, Lord of glory above what they describe, and peace be upon the messengers, and praise be to God, Lord of the worlds."

What the text means: Prayer for death, violence, suffering and hatred towards Jews.

Original source:

<https://x.com/Mrkazkwalqurani/status/1766838564614967661>

"From the supplications of Sheikh Hamoud Al-Sawafi"

NOTE – Link with posts 14/5/2024 (Video) & 12/06/2024 (screenshot)



Date: 03/03/2024

Posted by:

Description of image: List of Israeli date brands to Boycott with a red X through the flag of Israel.

What the image means: Indiscriminately targeting Israeli date farmers and workers is a clear expression of antisemitism.



Date: 29/05/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshot of video posted on Instagram reel containing quote; "Zionism is evil" multiple times. The video also included false and misleading information surrounding the Israel-Gaza war.

Link to video:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7fAUckI14F/?igsh=MxV4N2xwdDBmODN1eg%3D%3D>

What the video means: The video is aimed to illustrate "Zionism is evil" inciting hatred with false and misleading information.

What "Zionists are terrorists" mean: Incitement for hatred and violence towards Zionists and Jews.



Date: 14/5/2024 (Video)

12/06/2024 (screenshot)

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshots of video posted on Instagram reel.

Link to video:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/C63EIufL_hO/?igsh=N3dIOW1kbjl2b2o5

What the video means:

The video has references to "resistance" and "infidels"

the screenshots are [REDACTED] with the same man in the video with reference to him being his "super-hero" / someone he "respects a lot"

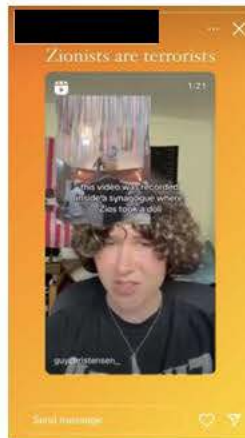
NOTE – Link with post 11/03/2024

Original source:

<https://x.com/Mrkazkwalqurani/status/1766838564614967661>

"From the supplications of Sheikh Hamoud Al-Sawafi"





Date: 12/06/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshots of video posted on Instagram reel containing anti-Semitic sentiment.

Link to video:

File name: KRHH8210.MP4

What the video means: The video is anti-Semitic, calling Jews and Zionists disgusting and intolerable.

Date: 19/02/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshots of video posted on Instagram reel.

Link to video:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Czn2UL6oXtR/?igsh=YWI0bTY0ZXJzdGow>

What the video means: The video is of a British woman refusing to condemn "hummus". The video includes metaphors and innuendoes of hummus being the terrorist group Hamas. Her statements include "putting chickpeas in a pressure cooker, you get hummus... I love hummus ... there is a lot to be gained from hummus... If I could, I would make hummus factories and fund them myself... I stand very firmly, not just with chickpeas but also very much with hummus". There is clear support and approval for the terrorist group Hamas.



Date: 26/07/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: "When American politicians lecture about human rights and international law, throw dirt on their faces" ... "58 standing ovations for the Hitler of our time by the bloodthirsty maniacs in congress. Twice the amount when he came in 2015. Just pure unadulterated evil."

What the posts mean: [REDACTED] is calling the PM of Israel Hitler, another holocaust inversion, whilst insinuating he is an expert in international law (as an undergraduate medical student).



Date: 26/05/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshots of video posted on Instagram reel of [REDACTED] chanting "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" and "Fuck you, fuck you Sharon Pickles" followed by a post correcting his error of "Pickles" and clarifying "Pickering".

What the video means: The video is a call for the genocide of Jews and the annihilation of the state of Israel. It is a chant calling for hate and violence. Furthermore, the video includes [REDACTED] recording himself saying "Fuck you" to the Vice-Chancellor and President of Monash University, Sharon Pickering.

File name: TBD BE0360.MOV



Date: 22/04/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: Respect Existence or Expect Resistance

What the posts mean: The post is referring to the October 7 terrorist attack as a justified act of resistance. The statement justified the atrocities which occurred including; kidnapping, rape, torture, mutilation and murder of innocent civilians. It is a statement for violence and hate.

Date: 12/05/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

Content: Screenshots of [REDACTED] calling for people to attend Monash campus to protest a "Yom Hazikaron" event at Monash University campus (in memory of the fallen Jewish soldiers). In the posts [REDACTED] is calling for any member of the public in Melbourne to come to Monash university campus. "You don't have to be a student at Monas". [REDACTED] uses derogatory and dehumanising language when speaking of Zionists. "The Zionist bathroom in Victoria is holding memorial ceremony for the Zionist rats that died during this war in Monash"

[REDACTED] also posted videos of himself at the protest.

Video file name: WJZU2702.MP4

– 00:36 "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"

What the posts mean: The posts are inciting hate and violence. The video includes calls for the annihilation of Israel and calling for the genocide against Israelis

Date: 21/07/2024

Posted by: [REDACTED]

The text in English: It's genetic

What the posts mean: [REDACTED] has called Zionists as Nazis on multiple occasions. Here he is declaring that that there is a genetic component to Zionism (and Nazis) with an image of a person giving the finger towards the Israeli flag superimposed onto the German flag.

The mural is a remanent of the berlin wall and was originally painted in 1988 as a reminder of the 40th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom in Nazi Germany. "It's genetic" is deeply insulting with holocaust inversion and false scientific declaration of the style used by nazis themselves.



ii. Statement from a Jewish medical student

My Concerns

I find seeing a continuous stream of antisemitic posts from my colleagues on social media deeply concerning and troublesome.

I am continuously thinking of the consequences social media posts has on influencing other people's minds. I believe that medical students have a greater influence on the minds of others than average due to the respect of the medical profession and people's perception of medical students being future doctors. I feel there is a significant power of influence particularly with younger people given that students tend to interact with young adults being that themselves. Furthermore, the fact that these antisemitic posts are not one-offs but rather a continuous pattern of behaviour leads me to conclude they have no clouded judgement in their beliefs and have a genuine desire to influence others.

I am frustrated that the vast majority of social media posts are an oversimplification of the situation in the Middle East and are the main source of information for young people. The culmination of simplifications and false information adds to the issue of antisemitism. It is also alarming to see information from reputable sources questioned of legitimacy (or even denied) and information from non-reputable sources taken (and spread) as fact.

I am concerned about the character of medical students. We have been taught to think critically, use trusted and reputable sources, act with scientific rigour as people of science. I have seen the complete opposite practiced in order for people to articulate a narrative convenient for them. This narrative is often shortsighted, closed minded, insensitive and offensive.

I have been mindful to limit my time on social media specifically because of this.

I am not connected with all members of my cohort on social media but am confident there are more people who post antisemitic, misleading and false information that I do not see.

The reasons why I am confident that this happens is because:

1. I am connected with some students on 1 social media platform, see them post on that platform, and know they have accounts on other platforms where they are likely to post more content.

2. Other students have explicitly told me about posts of students that I am not connected with on social media.

3. I have noticed that students who previously were posting such content regularly since Oct 7, have since blocked me.

I perceive reason 3 shows a level of immaturity and unprofessionalism. My posts since Oct 7 have primarily been news articles of factual information from reputable sources. Choosing to block me leads me to conclude character of toxic closed mindedness which as a future medical professional is inevitable for impaired clinical judgment.



I am concerned about the workplace I am soon to enter. There are students that have clear antisemitic beliefs that have been expressed on social media. Some of which is expressed in more subtle ways which I believe explains why blatant antisemitism is growing.

In addition, the fact that these will be my future workplace colleagues, treating my friends and family who are Jewish is extremely worrisome.

Prior to October 7 I felt safe and privileged to live and grow up in Australia. I was conscious that antisemitism existed, but never felt it had the same tones to which my grandparents experienced who are holocaust survivors. Since October 7 I have felt the inheritance of the intergenerational trauma of the holocaust in a way I have never experienced before. I have seen both explicit and implicit calls for the death of Jews and Israelis by medical students. I have lost complete trust and confidence for these people to treat myself, my family, my friends, my community and any other public supporters of Jews and Israel. I feel the posts I have seen completely violate the values of not just a medical professional, but a member of the public. The fact that I have seen these posts come from future doctors leads me to feel this trust cannot ever be regained.

To this point I am greatly disappointed in the lack of action taken by the university. I am aware of students already having met with faculty for professionalism hearings with respect to antisemitic behaviour, with no action taken by the university to stamp it out. Students have ultimately been given the green light to be as antisemitic as they want with zero consequences.

A summary of the themes of posts that I have seen since October 7:

1. *Implicit antisemitism*
2. *Explicit antisemitism*
3. *Calls for Jews to die*
4. *Calls for Zionists to die*
5. *Calls for the genocide of Jews*
6. *Calls for the destruction of the state of Israel*
7. *Calls for Jews to suffer*
8. *Calls for Zionists to suffer*
9. *Prayer for Jewish death and suffering*
10. *Boycotts to Jews and Jewish affiliates*
11. *Spread of misinformation*
12. *Spread of disinformation*
13. *Spread of oversimplified information*
14. *Spread of misleading information*
15. *Posts shared and taken out of context*
16. *Posts of events that happened months or years ago and presented as present events*
17. *Posts of old videos/ images from unrelated conflicts and presented to be part of the Israel-Hamas conflict*
18. *Spread of blatantly false information*
19. *Spread of historical untruths*
20. *Failure to acknowledge truth and post corrected information (after posting false information)*
21. *Holocaust inversion*
22. *Dehumanisation of Jews*



23. *Dehumanisation of Zionists*
24. *Use and spread of unverified information*
25. *Use and spread of non-reputable sources as modes of sharing “fact”*
26. *Rejection of information from reputable sources*
27. *Denial of atrocities of October 7*
28. *Denial of sexual violence against women*
29. *Denial of beheading of babies*
30. *Glorification of Hamas and Jihad*
31. *Giving voice and sharing posts of known antisemites and antisemitic organisations*

Appendices

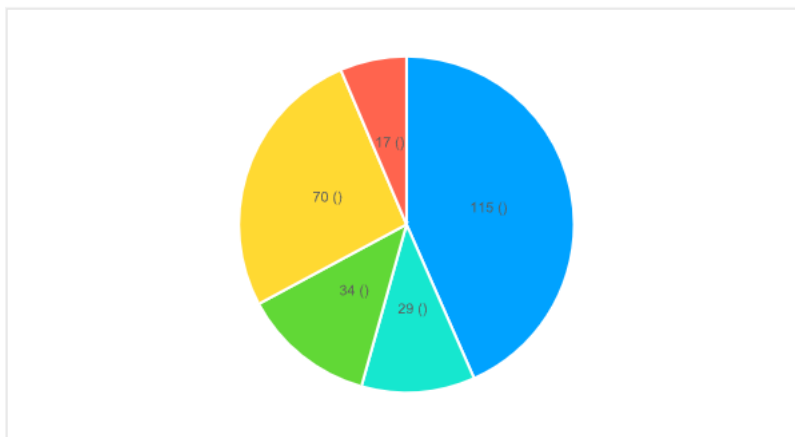
APPENDIX A;

Australian context of antisemitism and lack of cultural safety in healthcare

- A summary of survey data collected by The Alliance Against Antisemitism in Healthcare, Victoria, Australia

Alarming gaps in cultural safety have emerged in healthcare. Kingsbury and Greene described how a “wave of open Jew-hatred by medical professionals, medical schools, and professional associations in the wake of the Hamas slaughter suggests that a field entrusted with healing is becoming a licensed purveyor of hatred”¹. Cultural safety modules and organisational values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are neither being unconditionally implemented nor upheld. This needs urgent attention for the sake of patient care, healthcare professional safety and wellbeing, and the reputation of healthcare institutions and medical bodies.

To understand whether this lack of cultural safety for Jewish people in healthcare is relevant in our local context, we conducted a survey of Jewish healthcare students and professionals in Victoria, Australia. Of the 265 respondents, most were senior medical staff and allied health professionals (Figure 1). Sixty-eight percent work in the hospital setting, and 65% in the public system.



Chillingly, 127 (48%) of respondents have felt the need to hide their Jewish identity since October 7, and 162 (62%) are aware of someone else who has felt this. Eighty-eight (33%) people have experienced antisemitism in the workplace, with 59% of people feeling unsafe or uncomfortable to escalate these experiences. Aware of someone else experiencing antisemitism was reported by 162 (62%) people, with 73% reporting that the person has felt unsafe or uncomfortable to escalate these experiences. Since October 7, nearly 1 in 3 respondents have felt the need to avoid group situations at work or social situations with work colleagues outside of the workplace. These staggering numbers expose a shameful issue in our hospitals.

Respondents, including students and clinicians of different healthcare professions, shared their fear of exposing their Jewish identity, for example by not wearing their jewellery with a Star of David. One clinician described being asked to not use the Star of David as a mark in theatre as



people found this offensive. Examples of direct experiences of antisemitism in the workplace were described with many sharing that they have felt unable to respond in real time or to escalate, for example due to the power imbalance in the relationship. Numerous examples were shared of jokes being made about Jews being connected with banks and not needing to be paid because they are rich. Other respondents shared experiences of being cornered by colleagues simply to share extreme anti-Israel sentiments.

There were also themes of feeling let down by colleagues, hospital leadership and unions. Reasons for this included a lack of empathy or concern shown for the vicarious trauma experienced by Jewish employees following October 7 (with some noting the contrast of concern voiced for other minority populations after traumatic events), and a lack of response to complaints about antisemitic and anti-Israel actions such as a political protest held on hospital campus.

Since October 7, 1 in 2 respondents feel the need to hide their Jewish identity, and 1 in 3 have experienced antisemitism in the workplace. These numbers are alarming, and would not be tolerated for any other minority group.

1. Kingsbury I, Greene J. Bad Medicine. Tablet. 2023. 16 March 2024, Accessed 16 March 2024. <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/science/articles/antisemitism-medical-institutions>

APPENDIX B



LETTER TO THE EDITOR
<https://doi.org/10.1071/AH24011>



Isn't it time for health professionals to shift their focus from preaching politics to promoting peace?

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Isn't it time for health professionals to shift their focus from preaching politics to promoting peace?

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ABSTRACT

The magnitude of suffering on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides of the current war is beyond comprehension. Political agendas, misinformation and bias related to the conflict are being seen far too frequently in healthcare and medical academia. We believe it is time for healthcare professionals to redirect our attention away from politics and use our medical training to advocate for peace, care, and the welfare of all people, regardless of which side of the conflict they fall into. Politics in the workplace, particularly when disseminated information is divisive and, at times, based on opinion rather than fact, risks significant harm to patients, their families, and healthcare staff, as well as to institutional reputation. If we genuinely care for the well-being of patients and staff, we must lead by example and prevent healthcare systems and medical journals from being hijacked by politics.

Keywords: antisemitism, conflict, cultural safety, ethics, harm, healthcare, politics, war.

The current Israeli–Palestinian conflict has deeply affected both sides and sparked an infiltration of politics into healthcare, a sector traditionally dedicated to healing. Anti- Israeli sentiments and antisemitism escalated quickly after the 7 October 2023 massacre by Hamas against Israeli civilians – Jews, Arabs and foreign nationals alike,¹ with tangible consequences. In a survey of 265 Victorian Jewish healthcare professionals and students, since 7 October 2023, almost half (48%) of the respondents have felt compelled to hide their Jewish identity, and 33% have experienced antisemitism in the workplace, often feeling unsafe to escalate their experiences.² Such discrimination would not be tolerated for other minority groups, nor should it be. Kingsbury and Greene have described how a ‘wave of open Jew-hatred by medical professionals, medical schools, and professional associations in the wake of the Hamas slaughter suggests that a field entrusted with healing is becoming a licensed purveyor of hatred’.³

Only weeks after 7 October 2023, the Australian Medical Students Association (AMSA) issued a factually incorrect statement blaming Israel for historical oppression and attacks on Gaza. Following criticism, it was retracted, and an apology released.⁴ However, the motivation for such a statement is disconcerting and underscores the problematic nature of healthcare organisations engaging in politics.

Commenting on the Israel–Gaza conflict, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) called for all parties to ‘respect established International Humanitarian Law and not use health facilities as military quarters or depots...’.⁵ If organisations choose to involve themselves in politics, statements must be nuanced and balanced and include recognition of what is beyond the scope of medical expertise. We suggest that a balanced statement would include explicit condemnation of any organisation that deliberately embeds its terrorist infrastructure within and underneath hospitals.⁶

The implications of politics infiltrating healthcare are real, particularly in an era where trust in medicine and institutions is already eroded. Allowing politics in the workplace risks deepening existing social divisions, fostering hostile workplace environments, and allowing implicit biases



to fester. We are witnessing an urgent need to address an alarming lack of cultural safety in healthcare.

In 2019, an Ohio doctor was fired after tweeting her intention to ‘purposely give all the yahood (sic) the wrong meds’.⁷ Yahood is the Arabic word for Jews. This was before 7 October, but things are no better. In the UK, allegations have surfaced recently of a visibly Jewish 9-year-old boy being mistreated and denied appropriate care by ‘Pro- Palestinian’ nurses, with the child and his family now hiding their Jewish identity when seeking healthcare.⁸ Closer to home, a list was recently found in a secure area of Melbourne’s Royal Children’s Hospital outlining medicines and equipment (with inflated prices) to be supplied to the Gazan Ministry of Health (run by Hamas).⁹ Serious questions about the presence of this list have been asked.

Physicians and medical bodies outside of Israel and Gaza are misguided if they think their actions will meaningfully alter local political and military events. Meanwhile, allowing politics to infiltrate our local healthcare networks is compromising cultural safety for patients, families, and healthcare workers. The fundamental principles of medicine emphasise the care and well-being of all, irrespective of political background. It is time for the medical community to focus on upholding these principles and avoid political entanglements to ensure that healthcare remains a neutral, safe space for everyone.

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