

AUSTRALIA: AUSTRALIA

1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to wellness or wellbeing?

Over the past 12 months there has been a lot of things opening up. A Science based current affairs program on Public Broadcast Television called “Quantum” aired a stunning two part series on Cholesterol and Cholesterol drugs, revealing “the other side of the story” and creating a great deal of controversy and discussion.

They also did a two part series on gut health, gut flora and recent advances in understanding about the Gut-Brain connection, mental health, immunity and disease prevention.

Also over the past year there has been a major increase in the number of campaigns and discussions about Mindfulness Practice.

There has also been an explosion in the amount of different varieties of Kombucha Teas and Kefirs available in health food stores and some supermarkets. This includes a variety of boutique businesses doing some really creative work in the area.

2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think are important developments in your country for each of the following:

Spas: The entry of big investors into this market will drive it forward. The foundation of this industry in Australia is strong. I get a sense that when Corporates decide to embrace the industry, it will really take off again and become much more profitable.

Wellness Tourism: With the declining value of the Australian Dollar against other major currencies, tourism is strong. Tourism is up 7% this year on last year, with the biggest group of arrivals being for leisure, an increase of 4.2% on last year. This indicates an expanding market for wellness related services, including spas.

Wellness Living Communities/Real Estate: There are some continued initiatives with new ideas and designs for housing estates. Certainly retirement villages are really reaching for a wellness model with a great deal of focus on active living and supportive and connected communities. A great deal of effort is going into keeping people connected.

Beauty: This is not really my area of expertise.

Fitness: The Fitness Industry is ever expanding in Australia. There are more health clubs than ever before. 24 hour clubs are popping up all over the place and bootcamps are everywhere. Many more people are taking up group exercise and seem to be enjoying the experience.

Cyclists: they say that cycling is the new golf. Around the major cities on the weekends, literally thousands of cyclists are streaming along major scenic roadways like Melbourne's Beach Road. One can witness big pelotons in the early mornings on weekdays too.

Jogging: The increase in cyclists has not seen a reduction in joggers. Especially when the first day of spring rolls around, the numbers of early morning joggers multiplies.

Yoga and Pilates studios are popping up all over the place. There seems to be a new style of yoga every month. The hot room Yoga seems to be really popular in Australia.

Technology is continuing to expand when it comes to fitness. The use of Fitbits, smart watches and smart phone apps has also continued to expand over the past year. The huge rise in participation in fun runs and triathlons has seen an expanded interest in self-measurement and personal performance monitoring.

Nutrition: Over the past twelve months there has been some controversy as one of the country's most celebrated chefs has written a book and has been openly promoting Paleolithic Principles in his shows, in interviews and in the print media. His love and passion for "Paleo" is palpable. He is creating opponents in some circles and many fans in others.

Also, as stated in section 1, the use of fermented foods and beverages has escalated incredibly over the past 12 months.

We are also seeing a continued increase in the appearance of Network Marketing Companies promoting Nutritional Products.

3. How would you describe the state of workplace wellness in your country?

There is a move away from the traditional health testing, which was basically designed to tell people how unhealthy they are and how urgent lifestyle change is. This whole sector took a major downturn after September 2008 and providers became very conservative and careful. Wellness is now coming back in using non-traditional approaches. Fatigue prevention has become very marketable as it ties in closely with risk reduction. Companies have big budgets in these areas. Of course a person with a high level of personal wellness also has a much higher tolerance to fatigue.

Mindfulness Practice Training is very popular in Australian Workplaces.

Big Work Cover (Workers Compensation) Insurance companies are getting in behind wellness in a big way. In 2013 and 2014 The Work Cover Authority in Victoria provided a comprehensive program of workplace health checks right across the state. The results were quite appalling and a directive was sent out to the big insurers telling them they had to do more to encourage their client businesses to do more to promote wellbeing to their employees.

We are also seeing a shift away from testing to coaching. Life coaches are supporting people to get a greater sense of what they really want, then supporting them to take steps in that direction. As personal inspiration rises, so does motivation for change.

I am also seeing an increase in the number of business funding their employees to attend self-development programs like Avatar.

4. What has been the general attitude about investing in spa/wellness in your country in 2015? Specific examples?

In 2014 a large organisation named The Belgravia Group, which already had major investments in Fitness Centres, Recreation Centres and Fitness Equipment supply under their Belgravia Leisure arm, took over the ailing but widely known Hepburn Springs Bath House and Spa and turned it into a commercial success. They have now decided to move into this market and acquired businesses with potential and grow them. They have a big intention to become a major player in the Spa Industry in Australia.

5. Whose responsibility is it to create a well world?

Each individual. Even though negative and destructive behaviors continue, every person in the western world knows at some level that many things they do a detrimental to their health.

It is however up to governments and community leaders, and employers, to inspire people to take action. Inspiration is a key that unlocks possibility.

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