

USING EXPERTS BY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (EPPE) TO INCREASE INTEREST IN PSYCHIATRY AS A CAREER AT SIXTH-FORM LEVEL

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SUMMARY

Background: Psychiatrists play a multifaceted and critical role in improving the lives of people with mental illness. However, despite how rewarding, important and thrilling a career in mental health is, there continues to remain a shortage of psychiatrists in Low-, Middle- and High-Income Countries. There has been resurgence in interest in improving the image of psychiatry over recent years and several initiatives have been launched to increase recruitment into the specialty at Sixth Form level in the UK.

Design: We conducted a single-arm, pre-post, comparison study with Sixth Form students at an inner-city school in London. Students were invited to complete a survey before and after exposure to an assembly on mental health that was delivered by an Expert by Personal and Professional Experience (EPPE). Our aims were to detect and measure if there were any changes in perceptions of psychiatry and if there was an increase in interest in pursuing this profession as a career in this group.

Results: 63 out of 123 participants completed the before and after survey (51% response rate). Following exposure to the assembly, there were statistically significant improvements between the pre- and post- intervention means for, "Psychiatry has a positive impact on peoples' lives" (p value <0.0001), "People with mental illness can achieve success and be the best at what they do" (p value <0.0001) and, "I would consider psychiatry as a career" (p value <0.0001).

Conclusion: Notwithstanding the limitations of this pilot study, our findings suggest that an assembly on mental health delivered by an EPPE (i.e. 'Wounded Healer') might be effective at increasing interest in psychiatry as a career at Sixth Form level. We suggest that assemblies on mental health and psychiatry be delivered by 'Wounded Healers' in schools and colleges nationwide to help drive recruitment into psychiatry.

Key words: psychiatry – recruitment – experts by personal and professional experience – Sixth Form students

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The Scale of Global Mental Illness

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as, "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO 2014, P.1). With an ageing population through a period of great epidemiological transition, the emphasis is now on non-communicable diseases (Vigo et al. 2016). It is estimated that mental health disorders account for 14% of the global burden of disease (WHO 2011) (both DALYS and YLD combined), with depression predicted to be the leading cause of disease globally by 2030 (Scheffler et al. 2011). As a consequence, this leads to direct adverse economic losses through consumption of mental health services, but also indirect losses through social inefficiency (WHO 2011).

Whilst policy makers and international organisations have attempted to recognise the scale of the issue, as demonstrated by the addition of mental health in the sustainable development goals (target 3.4 and 3.5) (WHO 2019), there still continues to be significant numbers of untreated mental health disorders globally. Over the years this can be attributed to: the disparate focus between physical and mental health, in part due to the persistent stigma and marginalisation of those suffering with mental disorders (Vigo et al. 2016); governmental budgets; lack of education; accessibility; affordability and scarcity of resources (Scheffler et al. 2011, Luitel et al. 2017). One fundamental element hindering the failure to progress is the severe global shortages of the human workforce.

A Recurring Issue: The Global Shortage of Psychiatrists

The human workforce provides the backbone for an effective mental healthcare service able to treat the global population (Vigo et al. 2016). Psychiatrists in particular have a multifaceted and critical role in improving health outcomes. They act on the front line as clinicians directly treating patients, but also participate in education, research, public health and policy and advocacy (WHO 2017).

Despite the growing burden of mental disorders and the need for a fully trained, well-equipped workforce, there remains a pervasive gap between need and supply (Vigo et al. 2016). The 2017 report as part of WHO's Mental Health Atlas project demonstrates this gap to be greatest in low-income countries, with the median number of mental health workers per 100,000 of the population to be below 2; compared to above 70 in high-income countries. Of the workforce the numbers of trained psychiatrists suffer further shortages with less than 0.1 in low-income countries, compared to 11.9 per 100,000 in high-income countries. For subspecialties like child psychiatry, the numbers are inadequate with approximately 0.1 psychiatrists per 100,000 across all regions, except for high-income countries with 1.19 per 100,000. By observing trends using Project Atlas's datasets from 2011 to 2017 it is clear that the number of psychiatrists globally is at a critical shortage with approximately one physician per 100,000 (WHO 2017).

The Challenges of Recruiting into Psychiatry

Recruitment into psychiatry represents a global concern acknowledged by the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) that further drives shortages (Brown & Ryland 2019, Shields et al. 2017). An important element prominent in the literature that affects the numbers entering into the field is medical students' perceptions of psychiatry and the factors that influence this (Brown & Ryland 2019, Shields et al. 2017, Nortje et al. 2013, Goldacre et al. 2013).

A prospective cohort study conducted by Goldacre et al. examined responses on psychiatry as a future career from all UK medical schools, using questionnaires across 12 sets of new doctors between 1974 and 2009. They found that between the first- and fifth-year post qualification, only 4-5% of doctors expressed a desire to pursue psychiatry. This value remained constant between 1974 and 2009. These figures were similar to other developed nations such as the USA and Australia (Goldacre et al. 2013, Davies 2013).

However, since 2009 Health Education England reported its highest number of new core trainees in 2018 (386 doctors). Such an increase could be attributed to campaigns such as "Choose Psychiatry" in 2017 which gathered much media coverage (Rimmer 2018). This illustrates Sartorius et al. point that the negative repre-

sentation of psychiatrists in the media plays an important role in numbers (Sartorius et al. 2010).

Malhi et al. conducted a study among 580 second year medical students at the University of New South Wales in Australia, to investigate the desirable and least desirable traits of psychiatry as a potential career. The results showed only a 15% strong likelihood of choosing psychiatry. Factors that informed their decision were lack of prestige, psychiatry being classed as "unscientific," and low therapeutic success rates (Malhi et al. 2011). Other studies have echoed similar perceptions in addition to stigma, poor remuneration and public image (Gadit 2008, Shields et al. 2017), suggesting the deeply ingrained poor image of psychiatry impedes attempts to bolster numbers.

A study by Nortje et al. highlighted that recruitment in low and lower-middle income countries (LLMIC) is even more of a concern. An understaffed workforce has less time to dedicate to educating and instilling enthusiasm in their young counterparts. Without appropriate supervision, students are more likely to apply their own cultural beliefs and stigmatised views on mental health (Nortje et al. 2013). In low-income countries, the focus still remains on large inpatient hospitals so students are exposed to poorer working conditions, chronic refractory disease, overcrowding, uncivilised ways of detainment, and medicines shortage (Brown & Ryland 2019).

The Migration of Psychiatrists

The shortage of psychiatrists in low-middle income countries (LMIC) is further exacerbated by the migration of physicians to more developed nations, from urban to rural areas and from public to private sectors (Patel 2009). Undoubtedly, this "brain drain" curbs recruitment shortages in recipient countries like the USA, UK, Canada and Australia, but precludes efforts to scale up mental health services in developing countries (Mullan 2005).

Factors that incentivize this transition include better financial rewards, more educational opportunities and an established structure to recognize higher specialty qualifications and professional development. In addition, political volatility, lack of funding and poor working environment in donor countries further drives this movement (Gadit 2008).

In the UK the international fellowship scheme of 2003 aimed to recruit international medical graduates (IMGs) to improve service provision. Of 202 posts, 124 were filled by psychiatrists (Goldberg 2004). In Pakistan and India, whose doctors constitute a large proportion of IMGs in places like the UK, their already strained resources cannot be expected to progress with this kind of migratory movement (Khan 2004). On the contrary it can be argued, that to stop free movement of workers is unethical and against human rights (Gadit 2008). Gadit (2008) proposes that in recruiting inter-

national medical graduates, developed nations could offer financial rewards to recompense low income countries for the loss of their physicians. Such financial gains could contribute to further education and services in donor countries. This would be in line with the Commonwealth code of practice (Gadit 2008).

Stimulating Student Interest in Psychiatry

The significant shortage of psychiatrists (Choudry & Farooq 2017) relative to other specialties has catapulted a movement to propagate academic interest in psychiatry through focused initiatives aimed at relevant target populations. A plethora of initiatives have been launched in recent years to stimulate interest in psychiatry at two important target population levels: students and graduates, all with the unified aim to improve attitudes, increase interest and recruitment into the field of psychiatry, and to help address the ever-increasing shortage of trainees.

Schemes targeted at increasing medical students' interest in psychiatry have been in the form of clinical placements, teaching styles and unique enrichment activities outside the traditional scope of academic and clinical medicine. Many of the initiatives undertaken to increase medical students' interest in psychiatry have centered around the hypothesis that with more exposure to psychiatry in an experiential learning context, interest in psychiatry will undoubtedly increase. The theory of experiential learning, developed by Kolb (1984), stipulates that with active participation and post-experience reflection, learning becomes most effective. Exposure to psychiatry through clinical placements in the specialty forms the experiential learning which drives medical students' engagement in the field of psychiatry.

Importantly, the literature demonstrates that with more clinical experiences and placement in psychiatry during medical school training, a pronounced positive attitudinal shift is observed in medical students' attitudes towards the specialty. Lyons and Janca (2015) found that an 8-week psychiatry clerkship undertaken by Year 4 medical students significantly increased students 'definitely considering' psychiatry (10.5% at follow up vs 4.6% baseline). This correlates with findings from Lampe et al. (2010) who demonstrated an attitudinal and career interest improvement following an 8-week clinical attachment in psychiatry in medical students at Sydney Medical School. Similar findings were demonstrated by Khajeddin et al. (2012) who showed a significant improvement in students' attitudes towards the specialty, albeit no significant change in intentions to career pursuit, at Ahwaz Jondishapour University who undertook a month-long psychiatric attachment. Further to this, Malloy et al. (2008) showed that interest in psychiatry increased following inpatient Child and Adolescent Psychiatry experience in third-year clerkship, emphasizing the significance of the link between hospital experience and interest. Adekunle et al. (2016)

showed that a 4-week psychiatry placement positively impacted students' attitudes towards psychiatry with an increase in psychiatry interest as one of their preferred career choices increasing from 7% to 20%, with corresponding results reported by Xavier et al. (2010).

Innovating and Enriching Experiences

Unique enrichment activities encompassing psychiatry student selected modules, academic research, and psychiatry clubs undertaken in medical schools, have allowed medical students to experience the specialty in environments unconfined by traditional teaching methods. Such schemes depict the specialty in a unique light and engage students in a more creative way to propel their interest in the field. The launch of the Psychiatry Summer School in 2009 by the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience and the Royal College of Psychiatrists at King's College London depicts a hallmark example of a scheme aimed at propelling existing seeds of interest in psychiatry in medical students. The efficacy of summer schools in influencing a significant positive change in attitudes towards the specialty ($p < 0.001$) in medical students has also been demonstrated by Beattie et al. (2013).

Weintraub et al. (1999) showed that medical students who participated in an enriched psychiatry program at the University of Maryland were significantly more likely to choose it as a career compared with their 'regular' psychiatry curriculum counterparts. Interestingly, more abstract clinical experiences can change medical students' outlook on psychiatry. Mortlock et al. (2017) demonstrated how a one-day visit to a high secure forensic psychiatric unit can positively influence medical students' attitudes towards Psychiatry (207/277, 74.7%).

The use of alternative, more innovative teaching approaches has also been trialed as a method of delivering psychiatry teaching in a format that students can enjoy. One such teaching method of using role play based learning (RBL) was trialed at the University of Melbourne with qualitative data responses from students being overwhelmingly positive showing improvements in their engagement and confidence in their learning (King et al. 2014). Similarly, Pullen et al. (2013) have shown that a video-teleconferencing lecture series created for medical students with the aim of improving their exposure to child and adolescent psychiatry had a positive influence on 48% students in their views towards psychiatry. One-off bespoke events targeted at increasing medical students' interest in psychiatry have demonstrated a positive shift in attitude towards psychiatry. Robertson et al. (2009) recorded 123 medical students' perceptions towards psychiatry before and after viewing a 15-minute DVD on psychiatry showing significant increases in students considering this medical specialty. Vasudevan et al. (2015) trialed a similar promotional film intervention among Malaysian medical students

with results showing a positive, albeit modest improvement in perceptions. Similar findings were reported by Ahmed et al. (2015) on Medfest, the national medical film festival which also demonstrated positive attitude shifts towards Psychiatry. Agyapong and McLoughlin (2014) discuss the use of a public-speaking competition to increase interest in psychiatry of Ghanaian medical students showing that 78 % of the 37 medical students were more engaged in psychiatry after participating in the competition.

Engaging Junior Doctors

The significant workforce shortage in Psychiatry has been recognized at a nationwide level in the UK and has prompted the launch of the 'Choose Psychiatry' campaign by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 2017, which has demonstrated the use of social media in dispelling stigma and increasing awareness around the tangible impact psychiatrists have on patients suffering with mental health. The focus of the six-week media campaign centered around creating motivation for trainees and students alike in psychiatry. Further to this, the Expansion of the Foundation Programme report (Perry et al. 2016) has broadened the post- graduation psychiatry foundation placements with the forecast of engaging more junior doctors in psychiatry. As shown by Kelley et al. (2013), a foundation programme psychiatry placement has a positive effect on recruitment with 14.9% of trainees pursuing a career in the specialty post-placement, compared with 1.8% who did not have any psychiatry exposure.

Experts by Personal and Professional Experience (EPPE)

The Canadian Psychiatric Association reported that conventional education alone will not reduce stigmatizing attitudes (towards those with mental illness and psychiatry) in medical students (Stuart et al. 2014). AH pioneered, 'The Wounded Healer', an innovative method of pedagogy that blends the performing arts with psychiatry. The main aims of the Wounded Healer are to engage, entertain and to educate to challenge mental health related stigma, debunk myths about mental illness and encourage care seeking (Hankir et al. 2014). The Wounded Healer harnesses the power of story telling and traces AH's remarkable recovery journey from when he was a hopeless and impoverished 'service user' to receiving the 2013 Royal College of Psychiatrists Foundation Doctor of the Year Award and the 2018 Royal College of Psychiatrists Core Psychiatric Trainee of the Year Award (the RCPsych awards mark the highest level of achievement in psychiatry in the UK (Hankir et al. 2013). Hitherto, the Wounded Healer has been delivered to over 75,000 people in 15 countries in five continents worldwide. The Wounded Healer has also been inte-

grated into the medical school curriculum of 4 UK universities and it has featured in the 2014, 2017 and 2018 Royal College of Psychiatrists National Medical Student Conference in Liverpool, Leeds and Cardiff Universities respectively. Audiences report that the Wounded Healer is 'inspirational' and 'the best lecture they have ever attended'. The written feedback below from a delegate who attended the 2014 RCPsych National Medical Student Conference in Liverpool illustrates that the Wounded Healer positively influences students' perceptions of psychiatry:

'Unbelievable. This guy had charisma in spades. It was so reassuring to know that a doctor with mental health issues can overcome them and be so successful. Quite possibly the poster boy for my future career choice' (Zaman et al. 2018)

STUDY DESIGN

We conducted a single-arm, pre- post- comparison study on Sixth Formers who attended an assembly on mental health delivered by an EPPE at an inner-city school in London. The aims were to improve the image of psychiatry and increase interest in pursuing this specialty as a career. We designed a survey (see below) and administered it on participants before and after exposure to the assembly on mental health event. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, parents and the school.

Measures

The survey aimed to detect and measure any changes in the views towards psychiatry in the participants before and after exposure to the event and if there was an increase in interest in pursuing this medical specialty as a career. Responses to statements 1 to 5 were on a five-point Likert scale:

- Strongly Agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly Disagree (1)

The responses for question 6 were inversely scored. The statements were as follows:

1. "Psychiatry is interesting".
2. "Psychiatry has a positive impact on peoples' lives."
3. "People with mental illness can achieve success and be the best at what they do."
4. "I would talk positively about psychiatry to other people."
5. "I would consider psychiatry as a career."
6. "Seeking help for Mental Health problems is a sign of weakness."

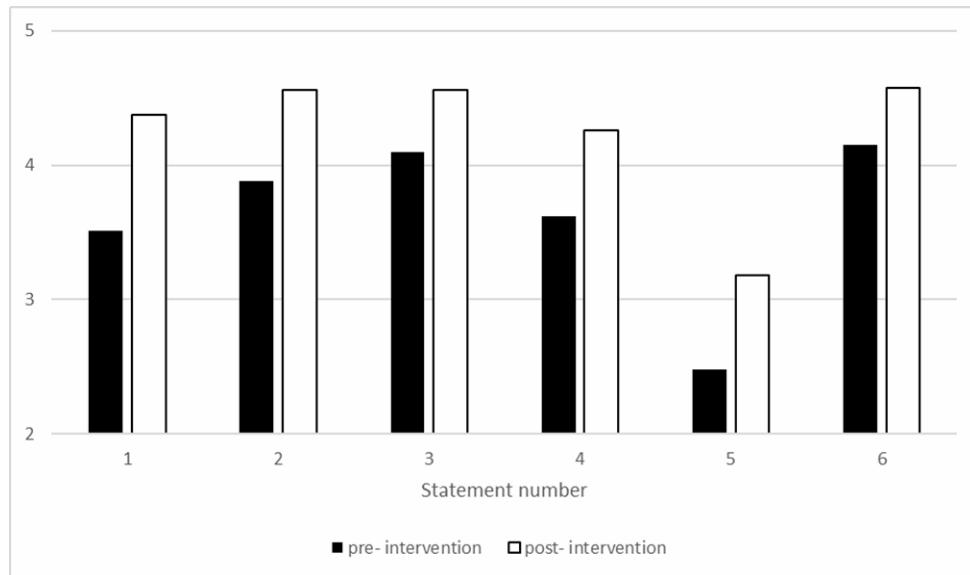


Figure 1. Pre- and post-intervention means for statements before and after exposure to an assembly on mental health delivered by an Expert by Personal and Professional Experience (n=63)

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were carried out on the data obtained. Paired, t-tests were computed to compare the participants' responses to statements before and after exposure to the event. Results were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ with a confidence interval of 95%.

RESULTS

For statement 1, "*Psychiatry is interesting*" there was a statistically significant improvement between the pre- (3.5) and post-intervention (4.4) means (P value < 0.0001) (see figure 1).

For statement 2, "*Psychiatry has a positive impact on peoples' lives*" there was a statistically significant improvement between the pre- (3.9) and post-intervention (4.6) means (P value < 0.0001) (see figure 1).

For statement 3, "*People with mental illness can achieve success and be the best at what they do*" there was a statistically significant improvement between the pre- (4.1) and post-intervention (4.6) means (P value < 0.0001) (see figure 1).

For statement 4, "*I would talk positively about psychiatry to other people*" there was a statistically significant improvement between the pre- (3.6) and post-intervention (4.3) means (P value < 0.0001) (see figure 1).

For statement 5, "*I would consider psychiatry as a career*" there was a statistically significant improvement between the pre- (2.5) and post-intervention (3.2) means (P value < 0.0001) (see figure 1).

For statement 6, "*Seeking help for mental health problems is a sign of weakness*" there was a statistically significant improvement between the pre- (4.1) and post-intervention means (P value = 0.0111) (see figure 1).

DISCUSSION

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study published in the literature to date that reports on the effectiveness of an Expert by Personal and Professional Experience increasing interest in psychiatry as a career in Sixth Form Students. Our findings show that the brief intervention was highly impactful; there were statistically significant improvements in the means in all six statements following exposure to an assembly on mental health delivered by an EPPE. Perhaps the most encouraging finding was the statistically significant improvement in statement 5, "I would consider psychiatry as a career" since this was the main aim of the study.

There were several limitations to our study. There was a small sample size, lack of follow up and the absence of a control group. Moreover, the survey that was administered on participants was not validated. Due to these limitations, our results are not representative, nor are they generalizable. Nonetheless, our findings are promising and provide provisional support that talks on psychiatry and mental health delivered by an EPPE are associated with increased interest in psychiatry as a career in Sixth-Form students.

CONCLUSION

As discussed above, despite the launching of numerous initiatives, psychiatry continues to remain under-subscribed. The 'recruitment crisis' in psychiatry contributes to the global burden that mental illness places on those who live with these conditions, their families and broader society. Notwithstanding this fact, we believe that there are innovative and exciting ways in which we can stimulate interest in psychiatry in students (at Sixth Form and medical school levels) and junior doctors so that we can increase recruitment into the

profession and ultimately attempt to narrow the pervasive treatment gap for those living with mental, neurological and substance use disorders in Low-, Middle- and High-Income Countries. We believe that the design, development and delivery of talks and assemblies by EPPEs will help stimulate interest in psychiatry at all levels and increase recruitment into the profession. More research in this area is urgently needed.

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Contribution of individual authors:

Ahmed Hankir, Frederick R. Carrick & Rashid Zaman conceived the idea for the study and contributed to the literature review and revised the manuscript.

Jahangir Mahmood & Sabah Ali contributed to the literature review and revised the manuscript.

Nour Houbby collected and analysed the data and contributed to the literature review and revised the manuscript.

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