

Formal Stress Management Teaching Incorporated into the First Year of a Doctor's Practice: A Career Transition Study of British Foundation Year 1 Doctors

Authors : Edward Ridyard, Vinary Varadarajan

Abstract : Background and Aims: The first year as a doctor in any country represents a major career transition in any physician's life. During this period, many physicians concentrate on obtaining clinical skills but may not obtain the important skills necessary to cope with stress. In this study we elucidate stress levels amongst FY1 doctors regarding the transitioning into specialty career choices, working in the NHS and anxiety about future career success. Methods: A prospective single blinded analysis of Foundation Year one (FY1) trainees using a non-mandatory online questionnaire was distributed. No exclusion criteria were applied. The only inclusion criteria was the doctor was in a full-time FY1 post and this was their first job in the UK. A total of n= 22 doctors were included in the study. After data collection, statistical analysis using chi-squared testing was applied. Results: The large majority of FY1 doctors (72.7%) already knew what specialty they wished to pursue (p=0.0001). With regards to their future careers 45.5% of FY1 doctors stated "above average" stress levels. The majority of FY1 doctors (64.3%) stated their stress levels working in the NHS were either "above average" or "high". Finally, 81.8% of respondents know colleagues who have been put off from pursuing specialties due to the stress of competition. Conclusions: A large majority of FY1 doctors already know at this early stage what area they would like to specialise in. With this in mind, a large proportion have above "average" levels of stress with regards to securing this future career path. The most worrying finding is that 64.3% of FY1s stated they had "above average" or "high" stress levels working in the NHS. We therefore recommend formal stress management education to be incorporated into the foundation programme curriculum.

Keywords : stress, anxiety, junior doctor, education

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