

'Educating the Educators' –

promoting student wellbeing at QMUL

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BACKGROUND

- Demand for mental health services in UK universities has rapidly increased during the past 10 years (1);
- Medical students are particularly vulnerable (2) due to increasing pressures (3), but many are reluctant to seek support(4);
- Opportunities to turn to support services positively affect university retention (5), and mentored medical students report higher levels of wellbeing (6).

AIMS

- To investigate QMUL undergraduate students' perceptions of wellbeing and factors that affect their wellbeing;
- To identify what support medical students need from staff in preparation for the introduction of Educational Supervisors in the new Medical Professionalism Curriculum (MEDPRO);
- To produce training resources for Educational Supervisors to enhance their mentoring and supervision skills.

METHOD

1. Literature review

- Key words: 'wellbeing', 'medical student', 'mentoring', 'curriculum';
- 27 research articles reviewed;
- Information summarised and later used to inform our training materials.

2. Focus groups

- 5 focus groups with QMUL undergraduates, N=29;
- Topics: **Wellbeing** → e.g. *what are the stressors/enablers, etc.* **Support** → e.g. *previous experience of mentoring, attributes of a good mentor, etc.*

3. World Café

- A structured group interaction session with medical students, N=22;
- Students discussed the impact of cultural background & gender on help-seeking behaviours.

4. MEDPRO Educational Supervisor questionnaire

- Educational Supervisors and staff from various departments (incl. English and Drama, Psychology, etc.), N=49;
- Identified the needs and expectations of training materials.

5. Training materials

- 5 audio-visual podcasts developed to support Educational Supervisors in their role;
- A steering group reviewed the podcasts;
- The feedback used to make appropriate adjustments.

OUTCOMES

Phase 1: Focus group findings

Figure 1. Factors that hinder undergraduate student wellbeing



Figure 2. Factors that facilitate undergraduate student wellbeing

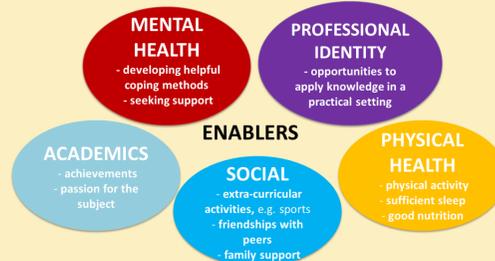


Figure 3. Transition challenges named at different stages of degree programme

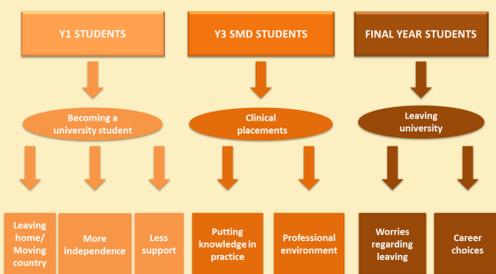


Figure 4. Characteristics of a good mentor identified by the students



Figure 5. Barriers to seeking mental health support within the university

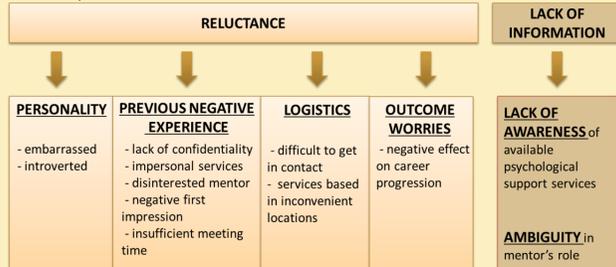
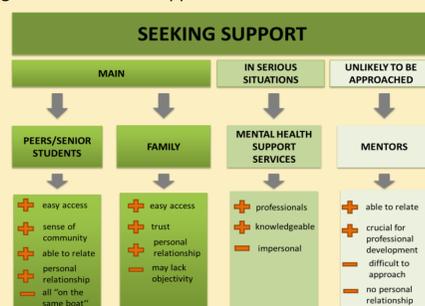


Figure 6. Sources of support and their evaluation



Phase 2: World Café

'Mental health is not equated to the same amount as a physical injury, so because you can't see it you can't really judge it'
(Y2 MBBS student)



'If you ask for help you are definitely frowned upon because you've got to be manly'
(Y1 MBBS student)

Phase 3: Training materials

1. Understanding mentoring (duration: 19 mins)

- The core attributes and skills of a good mentor
- Mentoring DOs & DON'Ts



2. Recognising mental health difficulties in university students (duration: 22 mins)

- Common preconceptions
- What's my role
- Warning signs & how to ask
- Confidentiality
- Sources of support at QMUL



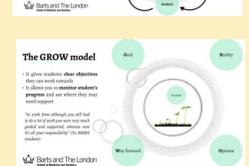
3. Reflective thinking (duration: 7 mins)

- Gibbs' model of reflective thinking
- Suggestions for practical implementation



4. Goal setting (duration: 7 mins)

- The GROW model
- Setting SMART goals



5. Giving Feedback (duration: 6 mins)

- The importance of constructive feedback
- Steps to providing good feedback



CONCLUSIONS

- Students struggle to maintain their wellbeing, which manifests by inability to control stress and look after themselves – support services should focus on fostering self-care;
- Medical students perceive the need for more meaningful relationships/interactions with mentors and supervisors; thus, we have produced training materials for Educational Supervisors to enhance their mentoring skills. The materials are easily accessible, QMUL specific, evidence-based and were designed to be relevant to staff members from other QMUL departments;
- Peer support networks facilitate wellbeing - further research should be carried out to investigate obstacles and enablers to achieving social integration;
- Cultural background and gender were named as factors that affect help-seeking behaviour, which also calls for further investigation.

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