

# Improving Awareness of Wellbeing Resources Available to Core Psychiatric Trainees in the West Midlands Deanery- A Quality Improvement Project

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## INTRODUCTION

The Royal College of Psychiatrists position statement has described the importance of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of psychiatrists. It recognises the impact of wellbeing on quality of patient care, maintaining good mental health among staff and, crucially for trainees, on recruitment and retention to the profession(1). Trainees and junior doctors are recognised as a population at increased risk of poor mental health, and suicide (2). During the Covid-19 pandemic further pressures on trainees made wellbeing particularly pertinent(3), trainees were working outside of their usual remit and faced changes to training pathways and exams. Remote induction, teaching and supervision due to Covid-19 restrictions impacted the information about wellbeing resources to which trainees were exposed. Trainees in the West Midlands Deanery have access to an excellent range of support via local and national services, however, anecdotally there has been a lack of trainee awareness and understanding of these resources.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Using a quality improvement project format we aimed to gauge the awareness and understanding amongst core trainees in the West Midlands deanery of the wellbeing and mental health resources available to them. We sought to identify which resources trainees were aware of, their understanding of how to access them, and what they provide. In addition we aimed to identify any gaps in trainee knowledge where further promotion of services was needed. Using this information we aim to improve signposting to available resources, and create wellbeing information easily accessible and applicable to all trainees in the deanery.

## METHODS

111 core trainees in the West Midlands deanery were invited to complete an anonymous online survey during November 2020. Results were presented in each of the four localities within the deanery as part of the post graduate teaching programme, and views were sought at that time on how to improve practice. A number of wellbeing resources were developed including posters for the doctor's mess, leaflet inserts for induction packs and an online wellbeing page on the deanery postgraduate virtual learning environment. A further round of data collection took place in November 2022 following dissemination of the wellbeing resources to assess their impact.

## FINDINGS

The initial survey response rate was 40% (44 respondents). 14% (6) of trainees felt well informed about the wellbeing resources available to them and 59% (26) somewhat well informed. 57% (25) who attended deanery induction and 82% (36) who attended local trust induction did not think wellbeing as a topic had been covered, or could not recall it being covered. Despite this, trainees were aware of a range of resources, with the most known being BMA Wellbeing, Psychiatrists' Support Service and the local Peer Support Unit. Trainees identified 'social media' and 'word of mouth' as ways in which they were made aware of resources. A further round of data collection took place in November 2022 following dissemination of the wellbeing resources. 165 core trainees were invited to complete the survey, with a response rate of 18% (29 respondents). 17% (5) of trainees felt well informed about the wellbeing resources available to them and 55% (16) somewhat well informed. 55% (16) who attended deanery induction and 66% (19) who attended local trust induction did not think the topic had been covered, or could not recall it being covered.

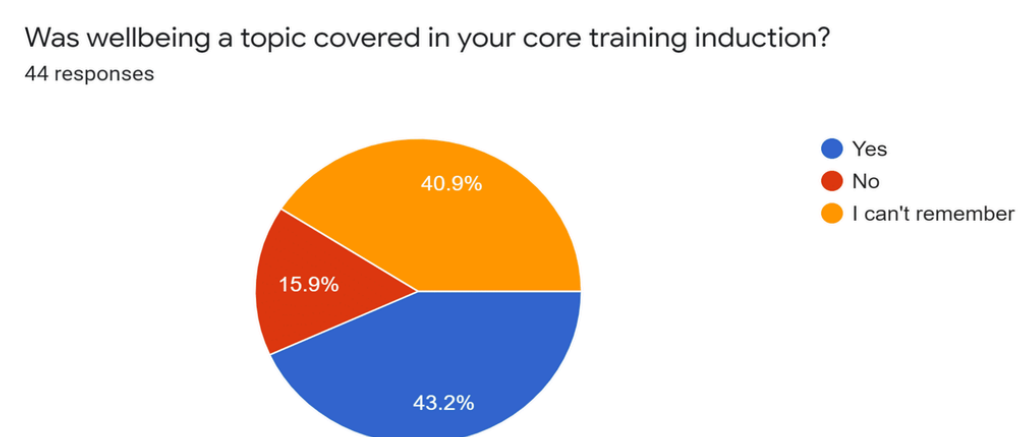


Fig 1: 2020 Trainee views on wellbeing within the core training induction programme.

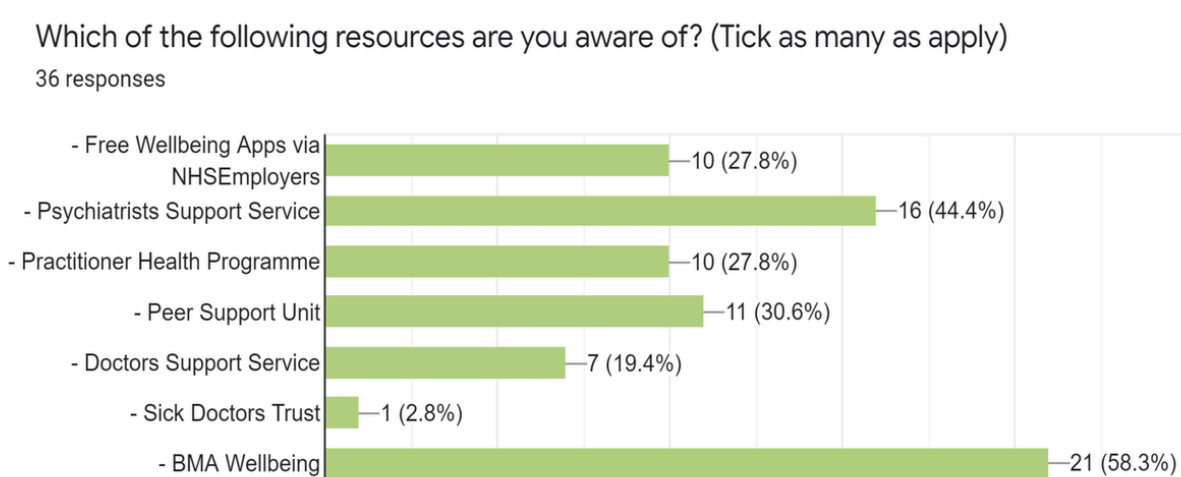


Fig 2: 2020 Trainee awareness of available wellness resources

## KEY MESSAGES

1. Initial results showed a need for prioritizing wellbeing during induction at local trust and deanery levels. Resource development and dissemination improved trainee awareness of available support 'app'. Trainees report that they would prefer this information to be included in their induction pack.
2. More trainees recalled wellbeing as part of local induction, showing successful integration of resources in induction packs. Doctors' messes, and halfways concerns about the impact on their training progression, and stigma may have hindered induction success. Leaflets and 'posters' as sources of wellbeing information, newly recognized since 2020.
3. Further promotion of wellbeing resources at deanery and local induction is necessary to reach all trainees.
4. Publicity for future surveys will be enhanced to increase response rates, which recently declined.
5. Some trusts have signed the 'Midlands Charter' and appointed trainee wellbeing representatives to support ongoing wellbeing initiatives.

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Fig 3. An A3 poster of wellbeing resources for use in the doctors' mess.

## REFERENCES

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- 2) Clarke, R. and McKee, M., 2017. Suicides among junior doctors in the NHS. BMJ, p.j2527.
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Differences in performance have been observed between white candidates and those from other ethnic backgrounds in the MRCPsych CASC examinations. In response, the Association of Black Psychiatrists has taken steps to address this disparity. This initiative led to the formation of the Association of Black Psychiatrist (ABP-UK) CASC group (1).

This association has members who are psychiatrists from diverse ethnic background across the United Kingdom. They have offered free online CASC tutorial sessions, mock exams, and discussion groups to doctors preparing for the biannual CASC exams over the past four years (2).

To ensure continued effective support for candidates, it has been imperative to understand their specific needs. This approach aligns with the principles of andragogy, where adult learners are more motivated when their individual needs and goals are recognized and addressed..

- ❖ Continuously evaluate the needs of candidates participating in the CASC tutorial group to identify additional requirements beyond clinical knowledge enhancement.

- ❖ **Examine the demographic makeup of candidates that access the online ABP-UK CASC group**

- ❖ The online questionnaire was sent to 120 candidates who registered for the tutorial by joining a WhatsApp group.

- ❖ The questionnaire was sent via Google forms and was opened to candidates between June 14 2023 and July 20 2023

❖ We had 74 respondents, accounting for a 61.6% response rate.

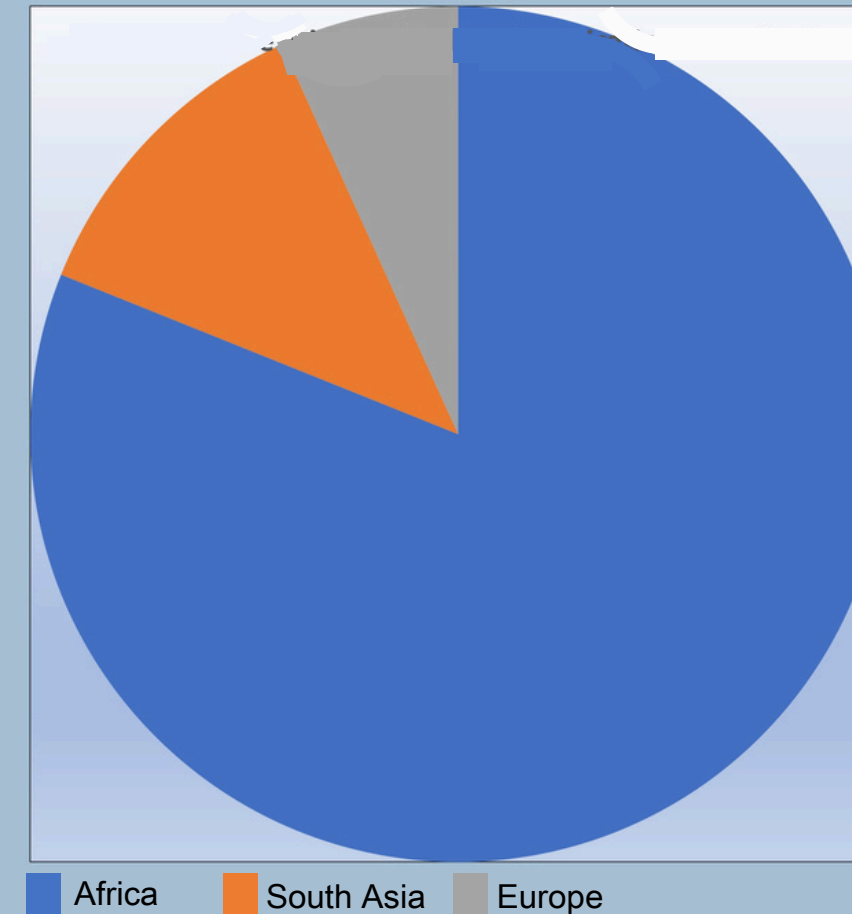
- ❖ Reminders were sent via email and on WhatsApp once a week.

Results were analysed using Microsoft excel.

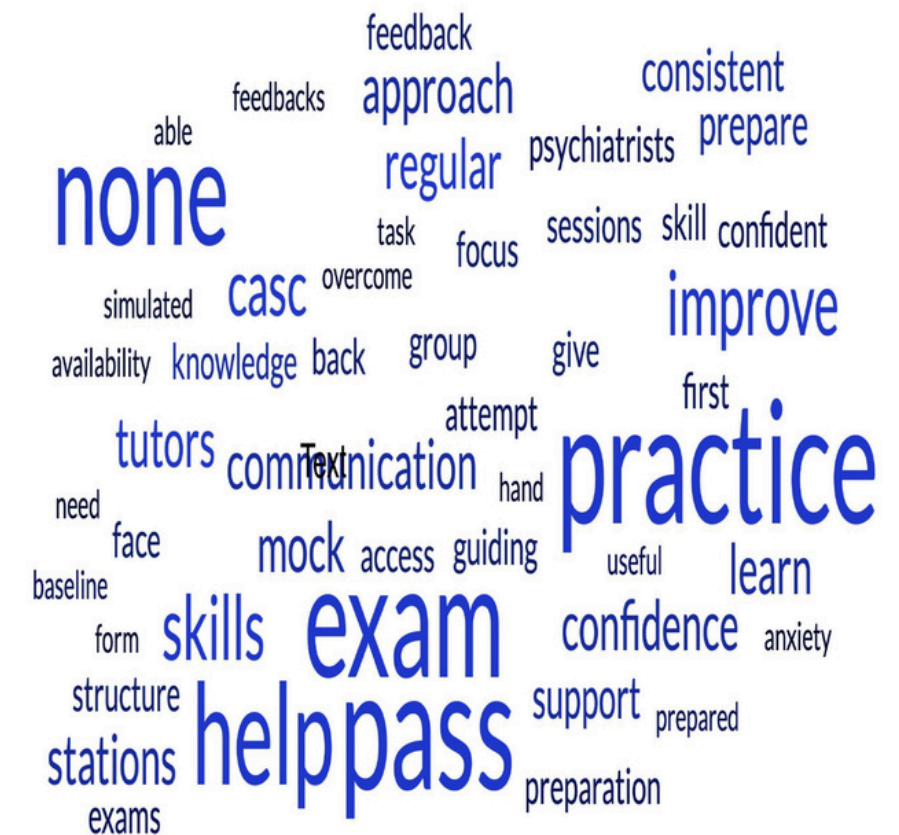
**Our findings indicate that the majority of our participants were female (60.6%). 27 out of the 74 respondents were trainees in the UK. Furthermore, middle-grade non-training doctors accounted for a significant portion 25 (35.1%). Approximately 27% (20) of the participants were working outside the UK while preparing for the exam.**

The average years of experience in Psychiatry were 6.28, while the average years of those working in the UK was 2.8. Over half (52.7%) had a post-graduate qualification in psychiatry before attempting the CASC. All respondents held primary medical qualifications from eight countries outside the UK.

A substantial 67.5% of participants were taking the exam for the first time, and 50% relied solely on this tutorial group for exam preparation. The primary goals for joining this group centred on building confidence, networking, improving communication skills, and establishing a supportive study community.



A bar chart showing the region where candidates obtained their their primary medical qualification.



A word cloud showing candidates response to the question:  
*What are your other expectations from the ABP-UK CASC course for the September 2023 exam?*

The study highlights the demographic qualities of participants in the ABP-UK CASC group and the progress that has been made in addressing the learning needs of a significant portion of IMG CASC candidates.

While improved clinical knowledge emerged as a major requirement for these candidates, the findings suggest that focusing on enhancing clinical skills and knowledge may not sufficiently cater to the needs of CASC candidates trained outside the UK.

Instead, the study suggests a shift towards a more comprehensive approach to tutoring international medical graduate CASC candidates. This approach should strive to strike a balance between refining clinical skills and knowledge while also addressing other crucial but often overlooked aspects such as bolstering confidence, improving communication skills, and fostering motivation for studying. By adopting such a method, the study posits that the performance of international medical graduate CASC candidates could be elevated to match that of their British-trained counterparts.

In essence, the study underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the multifaceted needs of CASC candidates, particularly those from international medical backgrounds, to better prepare them for success in the exams. A holistic approach that integrates clinical skills refinement with the cultivation of confidence, communication skills, and motivation is advocated to level the playing field for all CASC candidates, irrespective of their training backgrounds.

- ❖ We aim to provide ongoing CASC practice sessions for trainees from diverse backgrounds to enhance performance.

❖ We will strive to involve local and indigenous trainees in forums, creating opportunities for shared learning. Priority will be given to raising awareness about the need for examiners, ensuring personalized support for trainees and boosting their confidence.

- ❖ We will gather information from subsequent CASC diets to better prepare trainees for examinations.

- ❖ Additionally, we will promote networking and accountability structures to foster the motivation essential for success.

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