

The Psychiatry Early Experience Programme: Stigma, Attitudes and Recruitment

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Introduction:

Psychiatry in the UK has longstanding recruitment problems (1). Evidence suggests the positive effects of clinical attachments on attitudes towards psychiatry are often transient (2). We therefore created the Psychiatry Early Experience Programme (PEEP) where year 1 medical students are paired with psychiatry trainees and shadow them at work. Students will ideally remain in PEEP throughout medical school, providing consistent exposure to psychiatry and a broad experience of its subspecialties.

Objectives/Aims:

1. To present PEEP
2. To assess:
 - a. Students' baseline attitudes to psychiatry
 - b. PEEPs' impact on students' attitudes to psychiatry

Methods:

Design

A prospective survey based cohort study of King's College London medical students.

Recruitment

PEEP started in 2013. In this cohort all students that signed up were accepted.

Data collection

Students' attitudes towards psychiatry were assessed on recruitment using the ATP-30 questionnaire (3), and will be re-assessed annually.

Results:

127 students were recruited. Attitudes were positive overall. 73% listed psychiatry in their top three specialities. 95.3% agreed or strongly agreed that 'psychiatric illness deserves at least as much attention as physical illness.' 84.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed that 'at times it is hard to think of psychiatrists as equal to other doctors.'

Conclusions:

Baseline attitudes to psychiatry were positive. By March 2015 we aim to collect and analyse data on students' attitudes after one year in PEEP. Through on-ongoing analysis of this and future cohorts, we aim to assess the impact of PEEP on improving attitudes to psychiatry and whether this will ultimately improve recruitment.