A pilot project to increase trainee engagement using a social media platform – outcomes and lessons learnt


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Aims. Engagement with members is an important issue for the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) and an area for ongoing development. This is an extension that engages with Psychiatry trainees and the Psychiatric Trainees’ Committee (PTC) has adopted increasing engagement as one of its key aims. Divisional representatives in different areas of the UK had noted that trainees had limited knowledge of the PTC or its roles and projects both within the College and local areas. To improve this it was decided to pilot a project that established a social media platform for trainees to improve communication between the PTC, its representatives and trainees. It was decided that Workplace (a professional version of Facebook) would be used. This had already been established in the Severn Deanery.

Method. Northern Ireland (NI) and the East of England (EoE) deaneries were selected as pilot areas for the project. Preparation for the project included collaboration with trainees from the Severn deanery and meeting with the RCPsych Digital team. A scoping questionnaire was circulated to trainees in each deanery.

Following this, two closed groups were initiated on Workplace in August 2019 for Northern Ireland and East of England trainees.

Result. Results from the survey sent prior to the social media pages being established indicated there was appetite among trainees for the project. The pages were established in July 2019. The pilot project was promoted by representatives.

In the initial phases, approximately 40% of trainees signed up. Information regarding college and local events, committee meeting updates and training opportunities was disseminated on the platform. There was evidence of early use by trainees outside of the representative group.

This however was not sustained and gradually use of the platform reduced over the pilot period, both in postings and membership. A further questionnaire circulated in July 2020 highlighted trainees’ concerns relating to the platform, including concerns around data protection and a high number of notifications associated with the Workplace medium. The ultimate impact on engagement was also felt to be minimal.

Conclusion. Following feedback and increasing usage costs by Workplace, it was decided not to continue with a nationwide role out of the project. COVID-19 has seen the successful use of platforms such as Microsoft Teams and these may be considered in the future, given their integration with existing trust systems.

Creating a virtual, clinical scenario based teaching programme for foundation doctors in Leeds

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Aims. Through consultation with foundation doctors on their psychiatry placements in Leeds, we established that they didn’t feel the trustwide teaching programme met their needs, with them rating the relevance as 5.8 on a 1-10 Likert scale. They also reported their access to formal and informal teaching had been limited by COVID-19 restrictions. We aimed to create an accessible teaching programme that met their developmental needs as set out by the Foundation curriculum, as well as their confidence and skill set in dealing with common mental health presentations. Our supplementary aims were to promote psychiatry as a career and to provide supervised teaching opportunities to core trainees.

Method. Having assessed the foundation doctors confidence in dealing with different scenarios, we created a 9 week teaching programme covering common mental health presentations they’re likely to encounter during their training. The virtual sessions focus on what assessment and management skills would be expected for a foundation doctor, as well as when and how to access support and refer on. The programme was designed to be trainee led with the teaching being facilitated by core trainees as it was felt that they would best relate to the experiences and developmental needs of foundation doctors. This also provided the CTs with an opportunity to develop their teaching skills, something that has become more difficult during COVID.

Result. Through weekly feedback of the sessions we were able to demonstrate that for 8 of the 9 sessions the foundation doctors rated them as being ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’ and we’re currently reviewing the topic and materials for the outlying session.

Through self-assessed ratings before and after the programme, we demonstrated significant increases in confidence in dealing with all 9 of the scenarios. All of the foundation doctors indicated that they had found the programme beneficial.

Conclusion. As shown in the results, the programme has been well received by the foundation doctors who’s confidence in dealing with a range of scenarios has improved. The programme has also been well received by the trust who have asked us to repeat the it for future foundation rotations and by core trainees who were grateful of the development opportunities that this provided.
Further developments will include extending the programme for the duration of the placement to enable us to cover an enhanced range of presentations and to consolidate core skills.

The challenges of delivering addictions psychiatry teaching in the COVID era
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Aims. During the pandemic, addiction psychiatry moved from face-to-face lectures (delivered by Addictions Psychiatrists) to bite-size pre-recorded lectures (delivered by clinical teaching fellows) alongside interactive tutorials (delivered by Addictions Psychiatrists). The Addictions Team developed an online tutorial (delivered via Blackboard Collaborate) containing a combination of information slides, case studies, interactive quizzes, and short videos. These were delivered ‘live’ to small groups of students in up to four simultaneous virtual classrooms on a 6-weekly rolling basis. We aimed to assess student and tutor feedback regarding the move to interactive online tutorials in addiction psychiatry.

Method. Two questionnaires sought feedback from students and tutors, focussing on the change from face-to-face to virtual teaching during a 20-week period.

Result. 21 (of 161) students completed the questionnaire.

• 100% ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that the content of the tutorial was relevant to learning outcomes.
• 52% felt ‘somewhat comfortable’ unmuttering their microphones to contribute verbally, contrasting to 24% feeling ‘not very’ or ‘extremely uncomfortable’. In practice, only 30% of students contributed verbally.
• 57% felt most comfortable contributing via the written ‘chat’ function (rather than audio or camera).
• 65% felt either ‘somewhat’ or ‘very comfortable’ turning their cameras on, but only 1 student turned their camera on across all tutorials.
• 48% felt the tutorial was more accessible virtually than face-to-face; 5% considered it less so.
• When COVID restrictions were lifted, 14% would prefer the tutorial to remain virtual, 53% would rather it returned face-to-face, and 33% had no preference.

7 (of 7) tutors completed the questionnaire.

• 100% felt that students having their camera on would make their experience of delivering teaching ‘much better’ or ‘better’.
• 71% of tutors felt that students contributed ‘slightly’ or ‘significantly’ less in the virtual classroom.
• Only 29% of tutors found the experience of virtual teaching ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ enjoyable, contrasting 43% finding it ‘somewhat’ or ‘very’ unenjoyable.
• Several white space tutor comments suggested the lack of audio-visual engagement made teaching less rewarding, whilst also preventing them from adapting content, pace, and teaching style to suit the group’s needs. Tutors felt that the ease of delivering teaching from any location was beneficial.

Conclusion. Virtual teaching has become embedded in medical education and will likely remain so post-pandemic. For it to be an effective and enjoyable experience, for both students and teachers, there needs to be adaptation of content, technology, etiquette and culture.

Resilience-culture of support
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Aims. Better-informed trainees will have increased confidence and improved resilience which will have a positive impact on the workforce. To promote and celebrate diversity in psychiatric workforce it is imperative to acknowledge the above and provide adequate support to IMGs across UK.

Background. Nearly two fifth of licensed doctors in NHS are from black and ethnic minorities. Studies have shown that International Medical Graduates (IMGs) are particularly prone to certain difficulties compared to UK graduates. IMGs are more likely to be subject to investigations by General Medical Council for concerns over clinical skills and knowledge, communication skills, lack of awareness of the laws and code of practice. This has been highlighted by GMC as well as Royal College of Psychiatrists. To promote and celebrate diversity in psychiatric workforce it is imperative to acknowledge this and provide adequate support to IMGs across UK.

Method. An additional rotation wide induction programme was started for IMGs in August 2018 in West Yorkshire. This has continued on a 6 monthly basis for all new starters and last one was held on 21st of August 2019. Teaching included information about Good Medical Practice, confidentiality issues, principles of consent, information about living skills and practical teaching on phlebotomy and requesting investigations.

Result. The doctors who attended these sessions found it to be very helpful and some suggested it to be a full day programme. According to the feedback collected there was a definite improvement in understanding noted by IMGs in most areas covered. This induction was also acknowledged in the School of Psychiatry conference in October 2019.

Conclusion. Considering the increasing numbers of International medical graduates it will be beneficial to arrange similar events at local level for easier accessibility. In line with RCPsych and GMC guidelines all trusts should be encouraged to offer IMG induction sessions locally.

More than just the mental health act – foundation-specific teaching to inspire psychiatrists
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Aims. This project aimed to further develop a teaching programme for Foundation Doctors attached to a psychiatry rotation. The purpose was threefold – to educate foundation doctors about important psychiatric topics; to encourage them to think about wider impacts of psychiatry; and to inspire them to consider psychiatric training in the longer term.

Background. The Royal College of Psychiatrists’ mission statement includes actively promoting psychiatry as a career and