

College Position Statement Work Experience in Psychiatry

The College strongly supports Psychiatrists and organisations that offer year 12 and 13 students the opportunity for work experience in psychiatry. Students considering a career in medicine are encouraged as part of their preparation for an application to undertake voluntary work and work experience in areas relevant to medicine. Hence there is significant demand for work experience placements.

Many Trusts have considerable experience of offering work experience to potential medical students and the experience has been found to be a positive one for all concerned. Those students who decide upon a different career or who are unable to follow a career in medicine, there has been the opportunity to experience work in a mental health setting which will act to de-stigmatise mental health issues. Those who do go onto a career in medicine, whether or not they choose a career in psychiatry, will have had a positive experience of mental health services at an early stage of their career development.

The College strongly believes that access to psychiatry work experience should be open to all with particular attempts to encourage applications from students at schools which do not have a strong track record of sending pupils to medical schools. The opportunity for work experience in psychiatry should be available to all students with the potential for studying medicine, regardless of their background or their parent's occupation and personal connections.

Process

Organisations considering organising work experience placements in psychiatry should set up a process for this to happen. An individual should be identified who can coordinate applications and placements. Key issues to be addressed are:-

- i) Applications
- ii) Induction

- iii) Content
- iv) Feedback
- v) Patient and carer issues
- vi) Indemnity

Applications

Organisations should ensure that there is a clear and transparent process for applying for a work experience placement. If demand is greater than the placements available, there should be a fair and transparent process for determining who will be offered the placements. Some organisations require work experience placements to have undertaken a CRB check. Applicants must be informed how this can be done. The work is of a voluntary nature and therefore there will be no fee involved.

Schools must support the placement and indicate that the candidate has a realistic prospect for making an application to medical school.

Induction

Organisations must develop a local induction process that emphasises confidentiality, the privacy and dignity of patients and any student safety measures. The student should have a named contact within the organisation whom they can contact during the attachment should they have any questions or concerns.

Content

Organisations that have had work experience students have implemented a range of options including:-

- i) Sitting in on outpatient clinics.
- ii) Shadowing ward based doctors.
- iii) Visits with community staff.
- iv) Attachments to liaison psychiatry teams.
- v) Meeting with carers.

Work experience students have reported that almost all activities they have undertaken have been positive. What is particularly valued by students is individuals that take a personal interest in the student and have the time to explain and discuss what they are doing.

Feedback

Organisations should have a mechanism for gaining feedback from the students, not only their feedback of the placement but also how valuable it was in helping them decide whether or not they wish to pursue a career in medicine and, if they do, how successful they are in getting into medical school.

Patient / Carer Issues

All patients and carers must be able to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish a work experience student to witness the care received. Feedback is that most are happy to support work experience placements and indeed value the opportunity for influencing young would-be doctors. When asked, many patients and carers are happy to have separate discussions with work experience students about their experience of mental health services.

Indemnity

All organisations should have public liability and employer liability insurance which should cover the work experience placement.

Further Resources

South Yorkshire Training Scheme in collaboration with local Trusts including Derbyshire Healthcare Foundation Trust has operated a successful work experience programme for many years. The Trust's Operational Policy can be used as a template.

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Registrar

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