



Psychiatry

## So you want to be a psychiatrist?

Psychiatrists are medically qualified doctors who look after patients with mental health problems, such as depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders, anxieties, phobias, and drug and alcohol abuse. Psychiatrists work in a number of different places including hospitals, people's own homes, residential centres for older people and people with special needs, and even in prisons.

Did you know that one in four of the population suffers from mental health problems? This kind of illness ranks with heart problems and cancer among the nation's biggest health problems.

Psychiatry is one of the most varied, interesting and rewarding specialties in medicine. There are excellent opportunities for those who wish to progress to the most senior positions. As a career, psychiatry attracts as many women as men and it can particularly appealing for those interested in flexible (part-time) work.



## Why become a psychiatrist?

"I have never once regretted my decision to train as a psychiatrist.

The combination of different scientific disciplines covering areas as diverse as neuroscience, psychology, and social science, all brought together within a person-centred approach, is hard to beat within medicine. In psychiatry you can really make a difference to people struggling with the most devastating illnesses and can help them to return to satisfying and fulfilling lives.

No two people with mental health problems are the same and the privilege of being trusted with the most intimate aspects of a person's experience and being able to offer real and lasting help is uniquely satisfying.

Psychiatry may be frustrating and utterly challenging at times, but it is never boring, and a day rarely ends when you do not feel you and your team have done something both fascinating and amazingly worthwhile.

If you want to treat people as individuals and use the best of scientific knowledge to help them make a massive difference to their lives, then psychiatry might be for you."

Alan Lee, Consultant Psychiatrist



## How do I become a psychiatrist?

All psychiatrists are qualified doctors, so first you must first gain a place at medical school. Academically, you will need good passes in 3 A-levels, at least one of which must be a science subject (chemistry is compulsory at some medical schools). There is a lot of competition for places at medical school. Successful candidates need:

- good academic qualifications
- enthusiasm with good interpersonal skills
- a wide range of outside interests
- some interest in a caring profession.

You will find general information and advice on becoming a doctor, as well as a list of medical schools, on the following website of the British Medical Association – <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubbecomingadoctor>

There are many other careers in mental health that do not involve having a medical degree. These include psychology, counselling and social work. You can find more information about careers in these fields by contacting the British Psychological Society, the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy, Mind and the General Social Care Council. Contact details for these organisations can be found at the back of this leaflet.

## What makes psychiatry special?

As a doctor specialising in this area, you really could make a difference to someone's life, and help them regain their self-respect and happiness. Psychiatry is an excellent career choice for anyone interested in how the mind works, and someone who enjoys working as part of a team.

There is real variety in psychiatry. Every day can be different and every person you see will be unique. Psychiatrists work across a person's life-span, from childhood to old age. There are a number of different areas in which you can specialise, including child and adolescent psychiatry (working with young people up to school-leaving age), forensic psychiatry (working with people with mental illness who commit crimes), psychotherapy (using 'talking treatments', rather than prescribing medicines, to help people) and the psychiatry of learning disability (what used to be called 'mental handicap').

Psychiatry can be one of the most fascinating and rewarding jobs in the world, if you are bright, compassionate...



...and tough enough to take it on



## Would you make a good psychiatrist?

- Are you a 'people' person, with a genuine interest in how other people think and feel?
- Would you make a good detective and enjoy investigating complex situations?
- Are you bright, patient and tactful?
- Do you want to put your science into practice?
- Are you interested in finding out what 'makes people tick'?
- Do you have the personal strength to face the difficult problems people tell you about?



If the answer to these questions is 'yes', then psychiatry could be the medical specialty for you

To find out more about psychiatry, visit the website of the Royal College of Psychiatrists – [www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk) – or email: [careers@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:careers@rcpsych.ac.uk)

## Postgraduate students

A number of medical schools offer graduate-entry programmes to candidates who already have degrees – usually, but certainly not exclusively, in scientific subjects. These courses are shorter (usually 4 years) than the traditional 5 years. Students work in a variety of areas, including psychiatry.

To apply for these graduate entry courses you will need to pass the Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT).

Further information is available from UCAS: UCAS GAMSAT Office, PO Box 28, Cheltenham GL52 3ZA. Email: [gamsat@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:gamsat@ucas.ac.uk); tel. 01242 544730; web: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

## Contact information for careers in psychiatry

### The Royal College of Psychiatrists

Headquarters: 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG  
Tel: 020 7235 2351  
Website: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)  
Email: [careers@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:careers@rcpsych.ac.uk)

## Contact information for careers in other professions related to mental health

### The British Psychological Society (BPS)

Tel: 0116 2549568  
Website: [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)  
Email: [student@bps.org.uk](mailto:student@bps.org.uk)

### United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

Tel: 020 7436 3002  
Website: [www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk)  
Email: [ukcp@psychotherapy.org.uk](mailto:ukcp@psychotherapy.org.uk)

### Mind

Tel: 020 8519 2122  
Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
Email: [contact@mind.org.uk](mailto:contact@mind.org.uk)

### General Social Care Council

Tel: 020 7397 5100 (switchboard)  
Tel: 020 7397 5800 (information line)  
Website: [www.gsc.org.uk](http://www.gsc.org.uk)  
Email: [info@gsc.org.uk](mailto:info@gsc.org.uk)

