We have developed a sustainable, affordable Balint group scheme run by psychiatry trainees, providing groups for University of Bristol medical students in their first clinical year. The scheme is housed in and supported by the Department of Medical Education, AWP NHS Trust. We have the endorsement of Severn Postgraduate Medical Education School of Psychiatry and the University of Bristol Undergraduate leads.

The scheme was started in 2012 by Dr Ami Kothari and Dr Judy Malone, psychoanalytic psychotherapist supported by Dr John Potokar, Undergraduate Lead for Psychiatry, University of Bristol. A 3-site pilot was initially run within the student Psychiatry placement and this attracted good uptake and feedback. The scheme was therefore expanded in 2013-14 to cover 6-sites, with 6 groups repeating quarterly for each cohort of students rotating through Psychiatry. In the academic year 2014-15, we moved the scheme out from Psychiatry and into the Medicine and Surgery placement with the aim of demonstrating to students the relevance of Balint in all areas of clinical work. Balint groups were offered to the entire cohort of 3rd year medical students for the first time. 12 trainees from CT1-ST6 grade in Psychiatry were involved in running 16 groups of up that were repeated twice over the year. Each group accommodated up to 8 students and met for up to 6 hour-long sessions over the course of the placement. Trainees had access to regular supervision with Dr Judy Malone who has also run training sessions for trainees jointly with the Balint Society.

Student participation in the groups is voluntary; the majority have taken part and we have received good feedback from them. Students enjoy participating in the groups; they value the space for reflection with a supportive peer-environment, the chance to think about the complexity of the clinical situations they encounter and to consider the doctor-patient relationship.

Trainees benefit from the opportunity to develop their group leadership skills through the Balint model. They have taken posters to a variety of conferences winning prizes on three occasions. Four trainees were involved in writing a paper about the scheme that was presented at the International Balint Federation Congress in Metz this year. Drs Ami Kothari and Eva Stigaard-Laird recently applied for and won funding from Health Education England and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, to allow further development of this work.

The medical student groups are set to continue in this academic year. Using the funding, we are now working on a new strand of the scheme, offering Balint groups for Foundation doctors in the Acute Trusts. We are also making links with trainees in other regions in order to share our medical student model for replication elsewhere. Our scheme is novel in terms of the involvement of trainees as Balint group leaders, the provision of Balint groups for students within medicine and surgery and its scale. To our knowledge, this is the first Psychiatry trainee-led Balint group scheme for medical students and Foundation doctors of its kind.