

Pilot of an Exam Anxiety Seminar: Teaching to University of Southampton Medical and Nursing Students, Who Subsequently Teach School and College Students in Southampton

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1. Introduction

Most people at some point will have experienced anxiety about exams, and is completely normal. This should make it a topic that is relatable to students of any age. Extracurricular activities including teaching programmes, from experience, are popular with healthcare students to improve their skills and boost their CV. For these reasons, a teaching programme about exam anxiety appeared to be a suitable pilot to try and engage students in both mental health and medical education.

2. Aims

- To improve both university and school students' understanding of the biology and psychology of anxiety
- To reduce stigma
- To increase interest in mental health and medical education
- To improve university students' teaching skills.

3. Methods

A teaching programme was designed by Wessex Psychiatry trainees and the University of Southampton's Psychiatry Society. This consisted of a 45 minute interactive seminar on exam-related anxiety which was taught to university medical and nursing students in February 2020, to then be delivered to school students preparing for GCSEs and A Levels.

The seminar was divided into three sections:

1. Using a CBT model to explain the psychology of exam anxiety (Fig. 1)
2. Using modelling clay to show the neurobiology (Fig. 2)
3. Giving examples of practical methods to reduce anxiety

Feedback was collected through questionnaires from the university students, including rating scales to assess their confidence in delivering the different sections of the teaching session.

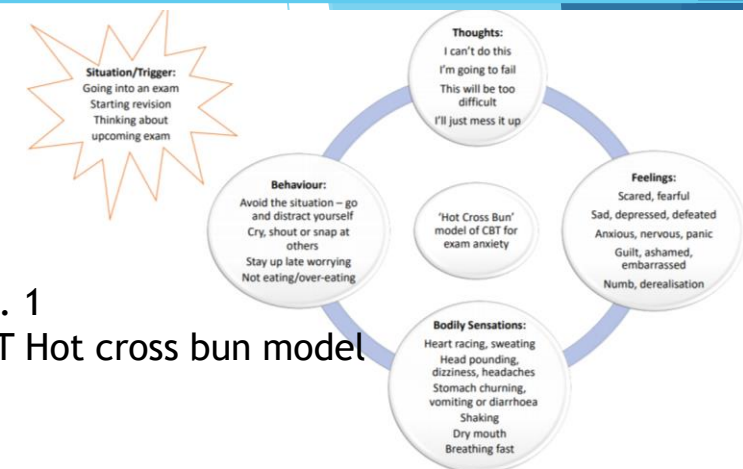


Fig. 1 CBT Hot cross bun model

4. Results

20 students attended the course, and 15 completed feedback questionnaires. The graphs below show some of the demographics of the cohort, and the outcomes in terms of confidence teaching each of the domains, and the impact on their interest in medical education and mental health.

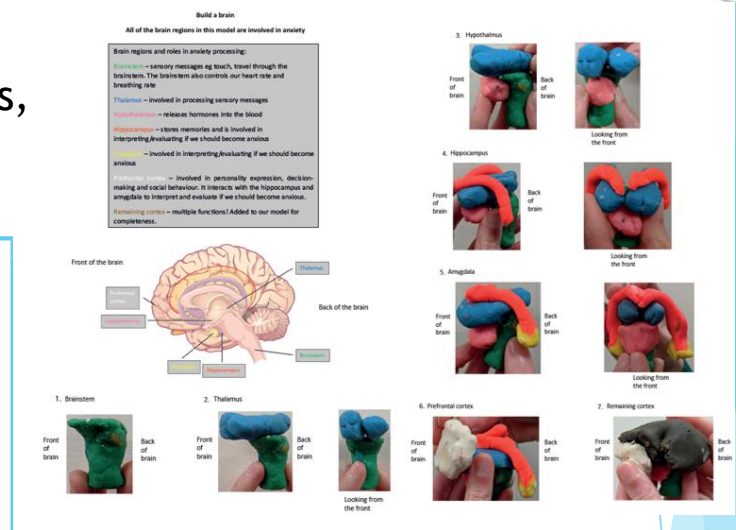
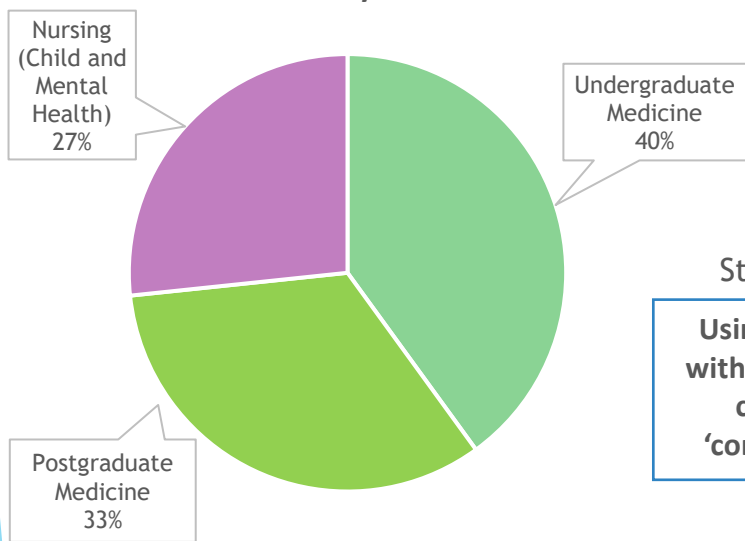


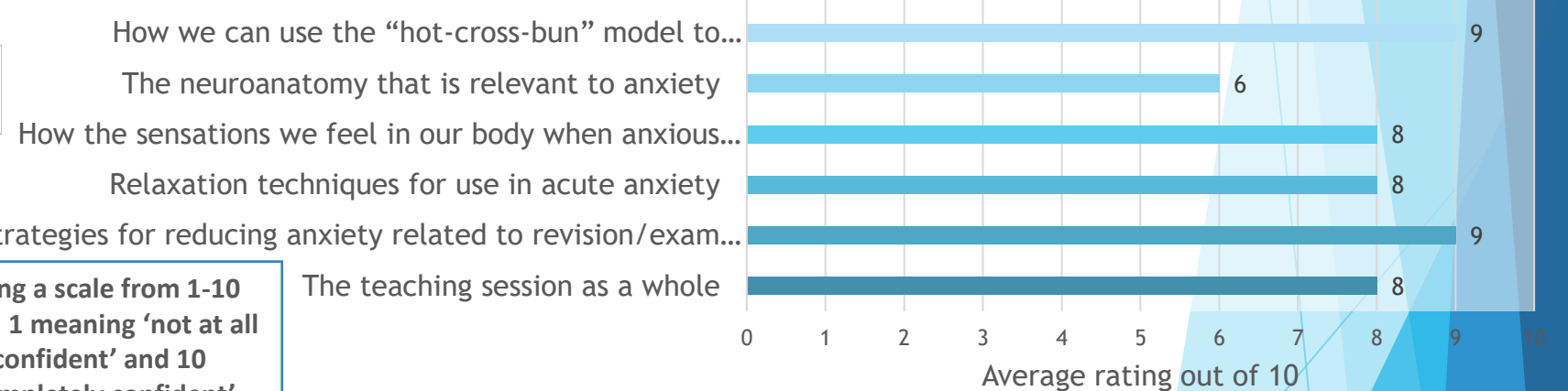
Fig. 2 Modelling clay model of the brain

After attending the workshop, the attendees were asked to rate their confidence in teaching the following seven domains

The workshop attendees were from different University Courses



Using a scale from 1-10 with 1 meaning 'not at all confident' and 10 'completely confident'



The attendees were then asked if the workshop had increased their interest in Psychiatry or Teaching rated using the three point scale 'More interested / About the same / Less interested'

5. Discussion

Medical and nursing students showed interest in this teaching programme, with the feedback positive overall. There was interest from a number of local schools and colleges for the seminar, but this has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Next steps will include looking at options to adapt the seminar into an online format, or deliver it in small groups in a COVID safe way.

As all students said they would recommend the course to a friend, the course could be continued and developed, with the possibility of future advertising targeting more nursing students, students further into their training, and potentially expanding to include psychology students.

