

Questionnaire to assess attitudes of patients on the level of involvement of medical students during psychiatric consultations

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Introduction

The exposure medical students get to psychiatric medicine within North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) has been limited due to a reduction in face-to-face appointments, secondary to the COVID-19 crisis.

We assumed the reduced contact with mental health patients may hinder their learning and lessen the chances of pursuing a career in psychiatry. Existing literature has researched the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on graduating medical students. Supporting our assumption and showing a lack of time on student placements has resulted in lower confidence and a lack of preparedness when starting foundation training[1].

However, online consultations during the pandemic have been found to be a valuable way of educating students [2]. A study based in primary care found that patients were generally happy to engage in teaching opportunities for students and that further knowledge about medical education would be beneficial to increase participation [3].

Whilst a study based on ENT clinics found patients were happy for students to be involved virtually with their care[4]. There is a lack of literature specifically examining psychiatric patients' perspective. Our project looked at whether similar findings were found in a psychiatric outpatient setting.

Methods

A ten-question questionnaire was created, encompassing a 5-point Likert scale and an additional comments section at the end.

Questionnaires were handed out to patients at the Jane Atkinson centre in Waltham Forest. Patients were selected if they were attending for a mental health service appointment.

The results from the questionnaires were inputted into a spreadsheet and the data were evaluated.

Aim:

To assess if patients felt it was important that medical students gained first hand experience of psychiatric consultations, and whether they would be happy to have student involvement in their care.

Hypotheses:

We hypothesised that patients recognise the importance of students gaining experience in psychiatric consultations, and most would be happy to have students attend the consultations physically.

Further, we hypothesised that patients would be amenable to having students present in consultations virtually or over the telephone.

Results

28 responses were collected.

93% of respondents either Agreed or Strongly Agreed it is important for students to gain first-hand experience of psychiatric consultations (see Fig. 1).

There was a preference for in-person attendance (in consultation room or home) over virtual attendance via telephone or video. However, the majority were happy with all options of attendance (see table 1).

The percentage that Agreed or Strongly Agreed with each modality was as follows: In person - 93%; At their home - 61%; By telephone - 75%; On a video call (Cameras + Microphones On) - 71%; On a video call (Cameras + Microphones Off) - 57%.

Fig. 1 demonstrates patients' views on how important it is for medical students to get first-hand experience of psychiatric consultations

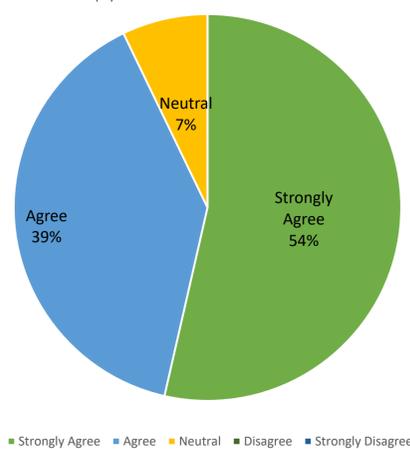
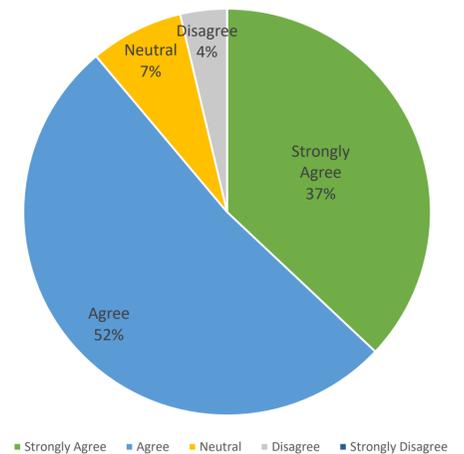


Fig. 2 shows patient' view on whether they would be agreeable to medical students asking questions during the consultation



There was a preference for a lower number of students present on a telephone or video call – A majority (61%) did not want more than two students listening in at a time. 86% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would be happy with students asking questions during consultations.

The themes that came from the qualitative responses was that students needed as much exposure as possible to patients, and the more experience they gained now, the better they would be as doctors. Only one response stated that technology made them anxious.

Discussion

- As predicted, the majority of patients polled were in agreement that it was important for students to gain first-hand experience and they were happy to have students ask questions.
- Furthermore, the majority of patients were happy for the students to be present in different modalities.
- Virtual consultations should not act as a barrier to student placements. There was a preference for cameras to be on and microphones to be unmuted if students were attending virtually - presumably due to transparency about who was present.
- This may be particularly pertinent for our patients who suffer from paranoia, psychotic symptoms and feelings of general anxiety, and is borne out in the qualitative response that speaks about anxieties with technology in general.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| The consultation room | 11 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Home | 8 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| Telephone | 9 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| Online video call (cameras + microphones on) | 8 | 12 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Online video call (cameras + microphones off) | 6 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 1 |

Table 1. demonstrates the results from questionnaires handed out to patients at the Jane Atkinson Centre asking how they would like medical students' participation in psychiatric appointments.

References

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