

AIMS

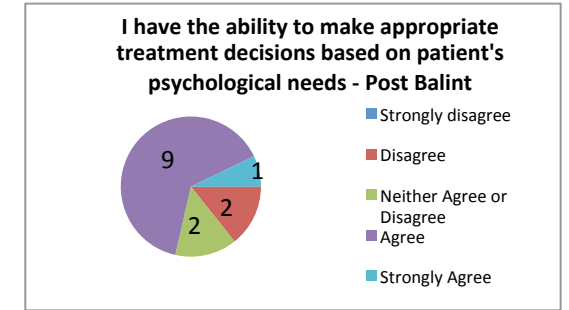
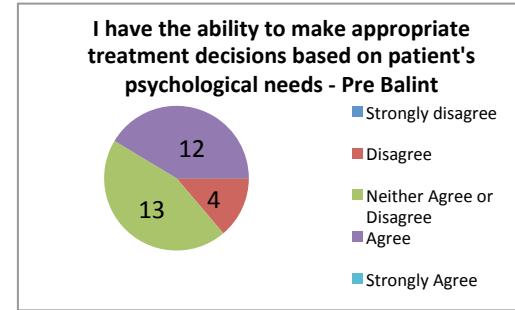
Our aim was to explore the experience of the FY1 surgical doctors taking part in a 12 week Balint group, using pre and post feedback questionnaires, as well as the experience of the co-leaders facilitating it.

METHODS

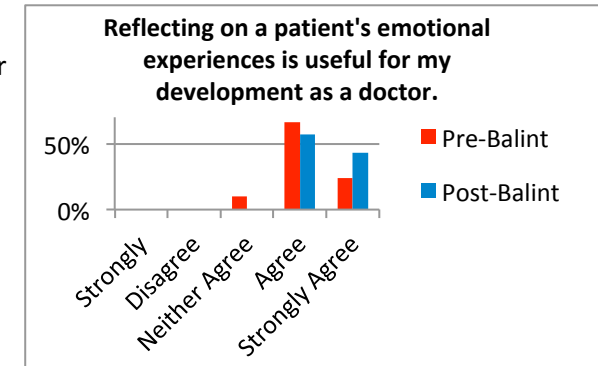
- Surgical FY1 doctors at a busy central London teaching hospital were invited to take part in 13 weekly Balint group sessions (introductory one and 12 full case discussions).
- Each Balint group (approximated to be a size of 6-12 members) lasted one hour.
- The two Balint co-leaders were not Balint accredited, but were all Psychiatry trainees with previous experience of Balint groups.
- All of the co-leaders took part in a leadership training day and received regular supervision by a Balint accredited supervisor.
- The FY1s, who attended at least 50% of the Balint sessions, received a certificate.
- Four consecutive cohorts of surgical FY1s (August 2018-November 2019) were chosen
- Pre- and post-group questionnaires were handed out at the first and last sessions respectively.
- Questionnaire contained 11 Likert scale type of questions, with some additional open questions and multiple choice questions
- 31 of pre-group questionnaires and 16 of post-questionnaires were collected in total

RESULTS

- Balint Groups were a new experience to 86% of the group members - only 4 out of the 29 respondents had previously experience of it.
- Expectations of the Balint Group were mixed but overall positive: There were 14 positive responses who felt they liked the sound of it and it was a chance to connect with others, 11 responders who felt apprehensive or neutral and 3 who responded negatively, unhappy it was mandatory and not sure they would benefit from it.
- We asked the group pre and post the group whether they felt they had the ability to make appropriate treatment decision based on a patient's psychological needs: there appeared more clarity after the group with 64% agreeing after the group compared to 41% prior to the group
- The majority of the group 71% (10) either agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them communicate more confidently with patients, relatives and carers



- Post Balint more members felt reflecting on a patient's emotional experiences is useful for their development as a doctor.
- 57% (8) of the group felt that they had changed and improved their practice as a result of Balint. The rest neither agreed or disagreed.
- 86% strongly or agreed that participating in the Balint group had helped them act with empathy, honesty and sensitivity, only 1 person (7%) felt it had not helped them do this



DISCUSSION

- Overall the Balint Groups were perceived as a positive, valuable experience. This is clearly shown in the post-group questionnaires, where all the participants agreed that they would recommend the group to a colleague.
- Balint groups can expose or bring to the forefront some positive factors for FY1 doctors such as increasing the awareness of the patients experience, helping to FY1s to respect the views of other healthcare professionals and act with a greater sense of empathy towards others.
- Important limitations of our study include the drop out rate between the initial questionnaire completion and the completion of end-of-group feedback (from 29 to 14 responders) and the reasonably small sample size

References

Kjeldmand, D. & Holmstrom, I. (2008), Balint groups as a means to increase job satisfaction and prevent burnout among general practitioners. *Ann Fam Med*, 6(2): 138-145