

A reflective group space for psychiatrists impacted by the death of a patient by suicide.

‘initially shock and – tearfulness, unable to focus, intrusive thoughts and memories, nightmares resentment, shame, helplessness,’ quote from psychiatrist (Gibbons et al)

Have you been impacted by a death of one of your patients by suicide?

If so come and join us for a confidential reflective group, specifically designed to enable psychiatrists to connect with others going through this experience. The aim is to help process the feelings that arise after losing a patient in this way, to reduce feelings of isolation and contribute to personal learning and development.

This Balint style group runs bimonthly for 90 minutes and is open to psychiatrists of all grades, including those in training.

If you are interested in joining the group or would like more information, please email pss@rcpsych.ac.uk

You can find further information and other resources on [this webpage](#)

Background

There is a growing awareness of the profound traumatic effect that a patient dying by suicide can have on doctors involved in their care. The intensity of this experience often combined with a sense of failure can provoke a range of responses including post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, shame, guilt, anger, isolation, and a fear of loss of career. The effect can be widely felt having consequences on both their personal and professional life, leading some to consider retirement and/or a change in career. In the aftermath the capacity to approach other patients, particularly those expressing suicidal ideation, can be hampered by fear of repetition resulting in defensive practice. This inhibits open-hearted clinical engagement.

In many health organisations there is little reflective space or support to process this experience. This emotional help can tip the balance towards constructive rather than destructive experiences and through processing this can encourage development and growth rather than psychological damage. In recent research 69% of those doctors who had been impacted by patient suicide wanted a reflective group specifically to process the trauma (Gibbons et al 2019). Several reflective groups of this nature have been developed to good feedback within different mental health localities. This remote confidential group is accessible for psychiatric doctors of all grades wherever they are based.