



A Response to: Medical Education and Mental Wellbeing During COVID-19: a Student's Perspective

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Around the world, medical students have faced similar challenges, particularly around changes made to learning experience. This has included adapting to online learning, less patient contact, uncertainty about exams, not to mention students who may have suffered losses due to COVID and other personal difficulties. As notably pointed out by the authors, medical school in the COVID pandemic could be perceived as a lonely battle due to spending much more time without face-to-face contact with peers and patients [1].

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has fostered a supportive medical community, and wellbeing of medical students has become of paramount importance. Medical schools must continue to provide and improve wellbeing support to improve medical students' wellbeing.

NMS has implemented a Wellbeing Champion scheme, to ensure there are responsible student representatives from each year group who can direct other students to the appropriate help within the student support system at the University of East Anglia. The champions keep communications open between faculty and students. They also create and release bulletin newsletters including self-care tips, advice about coping at medical school and useful support contacts.

The scheme also included online social events via Zoom, and when restrictions allowed, the champions were able to run an in-person social event in June 2021. This enabled medical students from all year groups to take time out from medical studies and to network and make connections with like-minded students.

UEA students also stepped up to promote mental wellbeing during the pandemic. Headucate, a mental health awareness society founded by NMS students, ran four hour-long 'Headucate at Home' online university student wellbeing workshops between 10th July and 14th November 2020 to provide a free, easily accessible wellbeing information [2]. The workshops included facing the stigma, explanations of

common mental health conditions, common struggles during the pandemic and how to address them, self-care ideas and interactive wellbeing planning. The sessions were very successful. 100% of attendees who completed optional anonymous feedback carried out post-workshop agreed that they enjoyed the workshop and that it was useful.

Although there remains a stigma around medical students seeking help for mental ill-health, which needs to be further addressed [3], it is more vital than ever that opportunities like those at UEA are maintained and available to those requiring support.

Declarations

Ethical Approval N/A.

Informed Consent N/A.

Conflict of Interest The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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