UK Performance Group Meeting

The UK Performance Group (a twice yearly meeting for all professional support units across all four countries of the UK) was hosted by Health Education Wessex on the 13th June 2014. The following Speakers presented on “The Future of PSU Services: What do our ‘Users’ need from us?”

- Manda Copage, Assistant Director (Revalidation) Wessex – providing the NHS England perspective
- Dr Julia Whiteman, Postgraduate Dean HENWL – providing the Health Education England perspective
- Dr Michael Marsh, Medical Director UHS providing the Trust Medical Director perspective
- Dr Simon Plint, Postgraduate Dean HEW – providing the Responsible Officer perspective
- Dr Mark Johnson, Consultant Histopathologist – providing the Practitioner perspective

The presentations provided a very helpful overview for the context of the work of professional support and the expectations that are placed on us. This led to a round table discussion about how we might best respond based on the question: *What do PSUs need to do to meet demands?*”- Answers were provided as below:

Where are we now?
- All at different stages – some PSUs are well established, some are new, some organisations don’t have a PSU. It is difficult to plan where to be when we are all at different starting points.
- PSUs exist but there are few signposts and bridges to lead to a PSU. They are not consistent nationally for equal opportunities.

Where do we need to be?
- Aim for consistency and same level of service and type of support across the UK. Need a standardised service and to be able to access a variety of expert services. Need a kite mark quality standard, so that each service is provided to a certain level throughout the UK.
- Need dedicated funding to support infrastructure in order to develop the support service we want in place.
- Expand PSUs to include post qualification support and include other health professionals

This table discussion proved a very effective prelude to Julia Whiteman leading our concluding discussion about the terms of reference for the UKPG, a discussion that had been started at a previous meeting. We were able to agree our terms which place high value on sharing best practice, providing opportunities for networking, promoting consistency of practice and which for the first time establishes a reporting link to the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans of the United Kingdom (COPMed). The group’s name has been altered to reflect this and so to become known as the COPMed Professional Support Group.
An exciting new pilot has been launched within the VSG, focusing on the development of trainee insight and self-awareness. This will help trainees to explore their interactions with patients and colleagues, to become aware of their beliefs and to consider the impact of their behaviours on others. It will offer a safe, non-judgemental space in which to reflect on their attitudes and work collaboratively with another professional to address these. This support would suit trainee doctors who have found feedback from others to be “off the mark” or confusing; who others may see as “defensive”, but whose self-awareness is yet to reach its potential. This is not personal therapy, but will use techniques from this field to aid the growth of a crucial workplace skill.

In an environment focused on the importance of acquiring technical skills, consideration of a trainee’s attitudes and beliefs can be overlooked. However, self-awareness and insight are vital aspects of a doctor’s training. They have critical implications for practice, with evidence showing that medical errors often result not from a lack of knowledge but “from the mindless application of unexamined habits and the interference of unexamined emotions” (see Borrell-Carrio & Epstein, 2004).

Improved self-awareness leads to better communication and relationship skills, and consequently better attention to patients’ personal and emotional lives (Smith et al., 2005). It is a necessary pre-requisite for progressing to senior roles.

However, this is an area with which many struggle, even late into their career. Research suggests that some doctors exhibit unrecognised, yet unhelpful, attitudes which can impact negatively on patient care. For example, an unacknowledged fear of losing control can lead to over-assertiveness in a patient interview; an unrecognised feeling that a patient reminds one of a relative can lead to avoidance of talking about their psychological difficulties (Smith et al., 2005); fear that admitting uncertainty in front of colleagues would be humiliating, can lead to asserting certainty in a diagnosis when one would otherwise be more flexible (Borrell-Carrio & Epstein).

A working definition of insight is “A tendency to explore intellectually and emotionally how and why I and those I interact with behave, think, and feel as we do and for me to adapt my behaviour accordingly” (Brown, Joffe & McAvoy, 2011). This sophisticated process is a challenge for many. It also poses a challenge for educators and supervisors, who find themselves working with trainees from whom they suspect certain attitudes, but who are not consciously aware of these. In deconstructing difficult patient or colleague interactions, these unrecognised beliefs can become apparent to the trainee, leading them to, as the ancient Greek saying goes "Know Thyself" (Hutson, 2014).

This pilot is provided by Dr. Claire Arthern (Clinical Psychologist). For further details please visit the PSU web pages. To discuss or make a referral to this pilot, please contact Rosie Lusznat or Richard Mann in the first instance.

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### Website Updates

Updates and additions to the PSU web pages include:

- Advanced Communication Skills pages have been published along with a profile of Jo Hopkins.
- Profiles for the Coaches have been updated.

As always updates can be accessed via: [http://www.wessexdeanery.nhs.uk/professional_support_unit.aspx](http://www.wessexdeanery.nhs.uk/professional_support_unit.aspx)

If you have any suggestions for the website please do not hesitate to let us know.

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### Changes to the PSU Team

Anna Parsons has been seconded to the role of Acting Recruitment & Workforce Manager commencing 4th August 2014. Karen Taylor will be covering this role on a temporary basis.

Julie Worthington will be on Summer leave from 24th July to 2nd September 2014. Hannah Batho will be covering her role for this period.

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### Referrals

So far in 2014 the PSU has received:

- 55 Referrals including 9 re-referrals
- 24% - Medicine Trainees
- 16% - GP Trainees
- 15% - Foundation Trainees
- 11% - O&G Trainees

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### PSU Contact Details

You can contact the Professional Support Unit whenever you have a query relating to our work, or if you’re looking for advice on a referral or active case.

If you have a general query you may find the answer on our web pages: [http://www.wessexdeanery.nhs.uk/support/support/professional_support_unit.aspx](http://www.wessexdeanery.nhs.uk/support/support/professional_support_unit.aspx)

Alternatively you can contact us individually as below:

Miss Hannah Batho, Acting PSU Administrator: [Hannah.batho@wessex.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:Hannah.batho@wessex.hee.nhs.uk) or 01962 718428

Mrs Karen Taylor, Acting Assistant Programme Manager for Revalidation & PSU: [Karen.taylor@wessex.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:Karen.taylor@wessex.hee.nhs.uk) or 01962 718413

Dr Richard Mann, Consultant for Professional Support: [richard.mann@nhs.net](mailto:richard.mann@nhs.net)

Dr Rosie Lusznat, Associate Dean for Professional Development: [rosie.lusznat@wessex.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:rosie.lusznat@wessex.hee.nhs.uk) or 01962 718417