Wellbeing

Introduction

When the British Medical Association (BMA) published its report: "*Supporting Health and Wellbeing at Work*" in 2018[1], it described the NHS as "*under-resourced, over-stretched and facing recruitment and retention problems*". It stated that NHS staff sickness absence was double the national average. As far back as 2009, the seminal report by Boorman[2] described the high rate of sickness absence in the NHS, in comparison to other public and private sector organisations. It revealed the pressure staff felt to attend work when unwell, the significant levels of stress, and the feeling that wellbeing was not prioritised by senior managers or the organisation. Worryingly, it highlighted that most NHS staff believed that their state of health affected patient care. Evidence supporting this concern has emerged, linking physician burnout to sub-optimal patient care, and to professional inefficiencies[3]. All of this was prior to the emergence of COVID-19 in late 2019 and the subsequent year(s) of unprecedented change and pressure within the NHS.

This module discusses the factors affecting wellbeing, at an individual and team level, as well as the impact of the workplace and the responsibilities of an organisation to support health and wellbeing. It will consider what we can do, not only to improve our own wellbeing within the culture of our workplaces, but to recognise how and when we can help others. The module content was informed by the learning needs of an interprofessional focus group of practising clinicians.

Module learning objectives

After studying and discussing this module the individual will:
- understand the causes of stress in the NHS and primary care
- recognise the signs of burnout in themselves and others
- understand the impact of practitioner burnout on patient care
- recognise the specific factors that affect individual wellbeing
- identify factors that create a healthy workplace culture
- consider practical strategies that can reduce stress and promote wellbeing
- discuss workplace interventions that could improve wellbeing