

# Stress at work raises the risk of health problems among doctors: *A UK cross-sectional study*

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# Today:

- Introduction;
- Methods;
- Results:
  - Prevalence;
  - Raising risk.
- Conclusions.

# Introduction

## **Panic, chronic anxiety and burnout: doctors at breaking point**

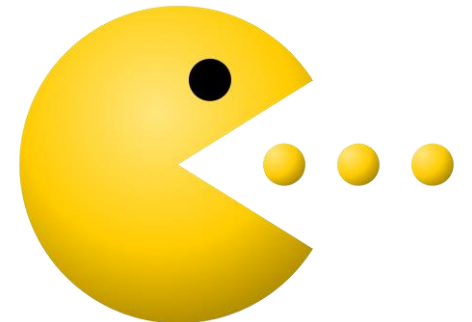
As the system piles on the pressure, who is looking after the medics?

- Scroll down for an extract from psychologist Caroline Elton's book about her work with NHS doctors



## Introduction: Aims

- 1) the prevalence of health problems;
- 2) if occupational distress increases a risk of maladaptive health-related behaviours and health issues among UK doctors.



# Methods

417 UK doctors  
(protocol  
#NCT02838290)

Sociodemographic characteristics		%(n) or M(SD)
<b>Gender (Male)</b>		48% (199)
<b>Grade</b>	Junior doctor	20% (82)
	General practitioner	18% (75)
	Consultant	49% (203)
	Other	14% (57)
<b>Specialty</b>	General practice	17% (71)
	Public health	12% (49)
	Anaesthetics and intensive care	9% (39)
	Paediatrics	7% (27)
	Emergency medicine	6% (24)
	Psychiatry	6% (25)
	Other	44% (184)

# Methods

- Insomnia (Insomnia Severity Index);
- Sleep disturbances (items from the Effort-Reward scale and Insomnia Severity Index):
  - Difficulty falling asleep;
  - Difficulty staying asleep;
  - Sleep problems interfere with daily functioning;
  - Think about work when they go to bed.



# Methods

- Alcohol dependence (Patient Health Questionnaire);
- Alcohol use habits (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test):
  - Frequency;
  - Quantity;
  - Drink 6 or more drinks on one occasion.
- Substance use to cope with stress (Brief COPE);
- 22 illicit and legal drugs list (Commonly Abused Drugs Charts; the UK drug misuse declaration).

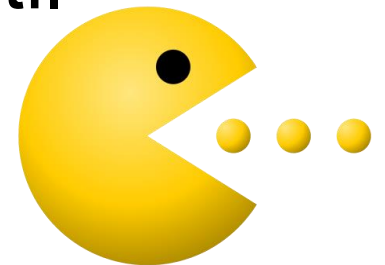


# Methods

- 12 physical health symptoms (Physical Symptom Inventory), e.g. upset stomach, headaches, diarrhoea.



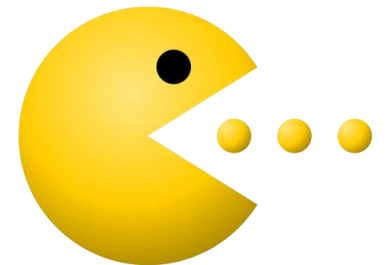
- Binge-eating disorder (Eating Disorder Diagnostic Scale as a scale and separate items): e.g. eat until feeling uncomfortably full.





# Methods

- Psychological distress;
- Burnout (emotional exhaustion);
  - Job efforts (e.g. time pressure, interruption);
  - Work-life imbalance;
- Maladaptive coping with stress strategies (self-blame & using substances);
  - Work experience (year);
  - Workplace (hospital vs other).



# Results:

Open access

Research

## **BMJ Open** Does occupational distress raise the risk of alcohol use, binge-eating, ill health and sleep problems among medical doctors? A UK cross-sectional study

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Asta Medisauskaite,<sup>1</sup> Caroline Kamau<sup>2</sup>

<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/9/5/e027362.full.pdf>

## Results: Prevalence

- 11% insomnia;
- 22-61% have various sleep disturbances:
  - 61% think about work when they go to bed;
  - 35% sleep problems interfere with daily functioning.



## Results: Raising risk

- **Significant factors:**
  - Emotional exhaustion & psychiatric morbidity (OR 1.344 to 3.826,  $p \leq 0.036$ );
  - Work-life imbalance (OR 1.577,  $p < 0.001$ );
  - Coping strategies (OR 1.414 to 1.854,  $p \leq 0.023$ );
  - Work-place (hospital; OR 1.953 to 2.172,  $p \leq 0.030$ ).
- Predictors significantly explained 23.4-39.1% of variance.



## Results: Prevalence

- 5% alcohol dependence;
- 22-34% use substances to cope with stress;
- 53% drink 2-3 times a week or more often;
- 44% use some type of drugs, but mostly over-the-counter medications (35%).



## Results: Raising risk

- **Significant factors:**
  - Psychiatric morbidity (R: frequency OR=0.478,  $p=0.019$ );
  - Coping strategies (OR 1.374 to 18.836,  $p\leq 0.039$ );
  - Work experience (more often: OR=1.036,  $p=0.002$ ; less hazardously: OR=0.970,  $p=0.007$ );
  - Work-place (hospital; OR 1.672 to 1.812,  $p\leq 0.044$ ).
- Predictors significantly explained 6-28% of variance (non-significant for drug use; use substances to feel better);



## Results: Prevalence

- 4-69% experienced physical symptoms (weekly/daily):
  - 69% fatigue;
  - 33% backaches;
  - 8% dizziness.



## Results: Raising risk

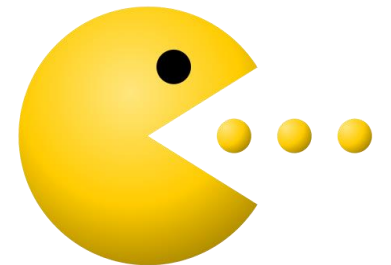
- **Significant factors:**
  - Emotional exhaustion & psychiatric morbidity (OR 1.804 to 3.544,  $p \leq 0.017$ );
  - Job efforts (OR=1.905,  $p=0.030$ );
  - Work-life imbalance (OR=1.717,  $p=0.005$ );
  - Work experience (R; fatigue, upset stomach, headaches: OR 0.963 to 0.972,  $p \leq 0.024$ ; ringing in ears: OR=1.050,  $p=0.002$ ).
- Predictors significantly explained 8-35.2% of variance (non-significant for backache);





## Results: Prevalence

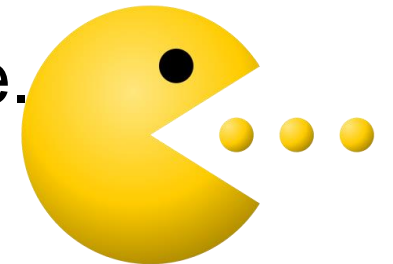
- 8% binge-eat;
- 24-35% reported binge-eating features:
  - 35% eating large amounts of food when not physically hungry;
  - 24% eating alone because they feel embarrassed.



## Results: Raising risk

- **Significant factors:**

- Emotional exhaustion (OR=1.378 to 1.841,  $p \leq 0.038$ );
  - Coping strategies (self-blame; OR 1.400 to 1.507,  $p \leq 0.040$ );
  - Work-life imbalance (OR=1.311,  $p=0.038$ );
  - Work experience (R; OR=0.966,  $p=0.009$ );
  - Work-place (community; OR=0.453,  $p=0.008$ ).
- 
- Predictors significantly explained 8.1-17.1% of variance.



## Results: Doctors responses

↑ [VictoriousRaptor](#) MD PGY1 47 points · 2 days ago

↓ I always wonder how much better our profession would be if our forbearers didn't have this "well I suffered through this, so you should to" combined with healthcare administrators who prefer to shave dollars to save pennies.

...

I know I survived on caffeine, shitty food, injuring my wrists god knows how many times on the punching bag out of frustration, and paying my therapist way too fucking much to have a handle on what life has been like.

↑ [Evangeline1313](#) 17 points · 1 day ago

↓ Agreed. This attitude of "you're a horrible doctor if you don't constantly overwork yourself" is a horrible attitude to have. No wonder doctors have so many mental and physical health issues-there's very little support apart from telling people to toughen up.

# Results: Doctors responses

- ↓ I'm a doctor working in the UK and I will add a bit of a counterpoint to this. I think a lot of doctors are actually perfectly happy and content. We are definitely hideously overworked but many of us are satisfied with our job. I mean sometimes the work really really sucks, but I know what I signed up for and ultimately the positives beat the negatives.

## Conclusions:

- High prevalence;
- Occupational stress raises the risk of health problems;
- Need to acknowledge the importance of stress;
- Change the culture & increase support.



# Thank you!

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