2nd Plenary Session:
“Doctors in Difficulty”

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What is the MedNet service?

- Addresses work, personal or career related problems
- Clinical assessment and brief treatment service
- A network of resources
- Confidentiality (within explicit limits of patient safety)
Nature of Service

- Self-referral
- Psychiatric and psychological assessments
- Up to 6 sessions
- Staffed by Senior Psychiatrists/Psychotherapists
- Narrative based, holistic exploration
Morbidity in the Medical Profession

Goldberg 1978
30% doctors above threshold on GHQ compared to 18% workers outside health profession

Caplan 1994
47% stress, 29% anxiety, 27% depression
Morbidity in the Medical Profession (2)

*Borrill (1997)* - 27% psychological morbidity

*Ramirez (2000)* - Evidence of stress among consultants. 27% psychiatric morbidity on GHQ (management and communication)

*Firth-Cozens (2000/3)* - 28% doctors show work-related stresses
Case A

Obsessional / depressive difficulties
Dominant Personality Configuration

Compulsive personalities with very demanding super-egos

*Gabbard (1985)*
- doubt
- guilt feeling
- exaggerated sense of responsibility

*Krakowski (1982)*
- perfectionism
- excessive devotion to work
- doubt
- unable to take leisure time

Socially valuable traits but personally expensive
Empirical study by personality characteristics

Brewin (1992)

Higher levels of self-criticism associated with high rates of depression and less satisfactory parenting
Problems with team working

- Absence of an agreed aim
- Ambiguous roles and responsibilities
- Lack of agreement about what working together means
- Problematic power relationships
- Ideological differences
- Conflicting models of care
- Cynicism/loss of faith (detached/depersonalised working)
Group v Individual (the dialectic)

- Relegation of individual needs and opinions in the service of the group
- Compromise
- Tolerate frustration
- Capacity to consider different points of view and approaches
- Ability to cope with complexity
- Ability to relinquish individual control for the collective approach
Stressors

- High demand, low control
- Recurrent organisational change
- Recurrent organisational demands
- The culture of perfection
Case B

Bipolar Disorder
Stigma

*Firth-Cozens 1999* - Problems frequently long-standing, untreated, and appear proportionately higher than in other occupational groups

*External* - adverse effects on career

*Internal* - shame, fear of failure

Conflicts with still prevalent role model of the invulnerable clinician able to cope with any professional stress
Addressing the challenge of stigma
Number of Patients who have completed the Follow Up Survey broken down by year

Total 98 Respondents
Completed the Survey of 391 Contacted = 25%
Work

- Are you in Full time work?
  *Total number currently working full time in medicine 66/98*

- Are you in Part time work?
  *Total number currently working part time in medicine 23/98*

- If you are not working, is this by choice?
  *Total Number not by Choice 7/98*

- Is this for health reasons?
  *Total Number for Health Reasons 2/98*
The importance of peer group support
Maslow - esteem

- The need for self respect
  entails confidence, mastery, achievement, independence and freedom

- The need for respect from others
  entails recognition, acceptance, status and appreciation
Doctor’s Feedback

- Want greater understanding of what generated their problems
- Importance of being in charge of one's own destiny
- Want more than protocol driven approach
- Value knowledge as a means to autonomy and self worth