

Engaging students with psychiatry: Why, how, and where are we now

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Medical students choice of psychiatry – an international survey

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The appeal of psychiatry as a speciality varies around the globe for a number of reasons. In a majority of countries, medical students are reluctant to choose psychiatry and this has become a much more evident matter of concern in the past three decades. The factors, which affect the choice of psychiatry as a specialty by medical students include external and internal stigma, quality of teaching of the subject as well as research exposure and clinical experience during placements. In many countries, a placement may last only two weeks and the exposure is to patients in asylums, whereas a majority of psychiatric conditions are treated in primary care. In addition, personal factors such as the ability to deal with openness and ambiguity play a role in the choice of speciality. A study in 19 countries to explore factors prior to entering medical school, experiences in medical school and postgraduate in the choice of the subject showed that those medical students who are likely to choose psychiatry fall into three major categories:

- those who had decided prior to joining medical school that they wanted to choose psychiatry;
- those who decide during medical school placements and, finally;
- those who select the speciality after having finished their medical school training.

The latter group has two further subgroups: one, which falls passively into psychiatry and another who make an active choice to take it up. Among 2198 students who participated, 4.5% of the sample planned to become psychiatrists, with a further 15% considering it as a possible career. Women (21%) were more likely to consider psychiatry than men (16%). Key factors associated with choosing psychiatry were personal as well as based on teaching/learning experiences. In order to recruit into psychiatry, better teaching, exposure to common mental disorders and small research projects may prove to be helpful.

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Papageno program: When learners collaborate for a safer coverage of suicide

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Media coverage of suicide has been repeatedly shown to influence suicide rates. The Werther Effect (WE) qualifies the propensity of suicide stories to prompt imitative behaviors. By contrast, the Papageno effect (PE) was more recently identified as a way for journalists to contribute to suicide prevention through their productions. Crucially, both WE and PE depend on the quantitative (audience, redundancies, size of articles, etc.) and qualitative (type of story, editorial style, content, etc.) properties of the coverage.

In order to promote the PE and limit the WE, the World Health Organization (WHO) have edited a guideline for media professionals. For instance, journalists are advised to prohibit sensationalism, avoid pictures or details about the suicide method, and show due respect to the bereaved relatives. However, it is now clear that the only chance for these recommendations to be applied is to integrate

their diffusion into a more general effort toward collaboration with journalists.

Papageno is a French national suicide prevention program that fully relies on learners to rise awareness about suicide and its coverage. It mainly consists in pair-meetings between psychiatry trainees and journalism students. Such an innovative formula breaks with the old top-down knowledge transmission model in order to foster personalized and sustainable sensitization. It aims at growing up a new generation of journalists who would be more aware of their responsibility concerning suicide and would more spontaneously resort to the WHO guidelines. Ultimately, the Papageno program strives for the creation of a new culture where journalists and psychiatrist would collaborate for a safer media coverage of suicide.

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Youth leadership in mental health: Views from EFPT and IFMSA

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The world today is more challenging than ever before. Discrimination, stigma, and ever-changing lifestyles are just a few examples of elements that have a profound impact on the mental health status of our global population. Even though the burden of mental illness is well documented and increasing, mental health remains a neglected area of health worldwide.

Youth Associations, like the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) and the European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees (EFPT) recognize the importance of tackling this problem, taking an active role on promoting education in our communities, tackling stigma and advocating for more action. Medical students worldwide, from Slovenia, Australia, Lebanon, Brazil, Quebec and Grenada – among at least 42 other countries, organise expansive, creative and engaging mental health projects.

With particular interest we can mention the winner of the last Rex Crossley Award, attributed to a Slovenian project 'in Reflection': a suicide prevention project, which tackles the different factors associated with vulnerable groups through a series of workshops and campaigns that seek to destigmatize the mental health problems and offer the opportunity to high school students to get the help they need.

This talk will give an insight into strengths, weaknesses and challenges faced by youth in tackling mental health, specially in the role of the IFMSA, displaying some of our most interesting and innovative projects from future mental health leaders around the world, together with the initiatives of EFPT.

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