

## Do Attitudes Towards Psychiatry Hold the Key to the UK Recruitment Crisis?

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### Introduction:

According to Mukherjee et al (2013), UK psychiatry recruitment is 'in crisis'. Psychiatry training programmes are consistently under filled – fill-rate of just 66% to the Core Training Year 1 programme in 2014.

### Objectives/Aims:

To investigate how attitudes towards psychiatry correlate with the likelihood of choosing a career in psychiatry.

### Methods:

Final year medical students completed an abridged version of the ATP-30 questionnaire, comprising 10 statements which were then rated on a scale of 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). Students also rated from 1 to 5 their likelihood of choosing psychiatry. The mean ratings for each question were compared between students who might choose psychiatry (*Group A*: likelihood ratings 3-5) and students unlikely to choose psychiatry (*Group B*: likelihood ratings 1-2).

### Results:

Of the 98 students who returned questionnaires just 3 gave likelihood ratings of 4 ('definitely decided to') or 5 ('seriously considering'), while 72 gave ratings of 1 ('no way') or 2 ('unlikely'). *Group A* were significantly more positive about the statements 'the problems of psychiatric patients are particularly interesting and challenging' ( $p=0.02$ ) and 'psychiatrists treat the whole patient, not just the disease' ( $p=0.02$ ). *Group A* were also significantly more against the statements 'psychiatrists are often merely failed physicians' ( $p=0.03$ ); 'psychiatry is unrewarding because treatment is lengthy and inconclusive' ( $p=0.001$ ); and 'psychiatry is too inexact' ( $p=0.04$ ).

### Conclusions:

While complex cases and a holistic approach may attract students towards psychiatry, deterring factors include the perceived low status of the specialty along with a feeling that treatments are poorly specific and lack scientific basis.