Recruitment of doctors into psychiatry has been a concern for decades. In more recent years the issue of recruitment has again become topical as psychiatry has consistently failed to fill all its training posts nationally. In 2011 and 2012, only 83% and 85.3% of core training year 1 (CT1) posts respectively were filled following the second rounds of recruitment. This raises many issues including concerns about future workforce planning and also that a need to fill training posts for service provision purposes may lead to recruitment of a lower calibre of trainees with longer-term consequences for the specialty. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has therefore implemented a national 5-year recruitment campaign, with its primary aim to increase recruitment to the CT1 grade of core psychiatry training, achieving a 50% increase in applications and a 95% fill rate by the end of the campaign. The College recruitment strategy outlines a variety of ways in which it is hoped that this will be achieved. One of these includes the creation of summer schools in each regional division, in the hope that this may ‘seed the idea of psychiatry as a career’.

In the UK, psychiatry summer schools are a relatively recent phenomenon. They were introduced by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Institute of Psychiatry in 2009 when the first event was held in London. Since then this event has run annually, and the concept has been replicated with summer schools emerging in other centres in the UK. Despite much time, energy and effort being invested in such endeavours, there has been very little published on the outcomes of these events; including what makes a successful event and the impact it has on the medical students who attend. A recent article published in The Psychiatrist helpfully outlines guidance on how to create a summer school based on the authors’ experience but recognises there is a need for evaluation of such events.

Concerns about recruitment of medical students into psychiatry are not unique to the UK. Similar concerns have been noted in the USA and Canada. Such issues led to the development of a summer school in Toronto that was replicated in other regions in Canada. This Canadian enterprise began in 1994 and data from its evaluation suggest a positive influence on career intentions, although less than half the students attending were ultimately matched into psychiatric residency programmes. Interestingly the success rate was higher when only students who attended the parent event were considered. Confounding factors such as difference in summer school programmes and the impact of other recruitment strategies may have contributed to this effect.

In creating a summer school it is important to consider the issues that may influence medical students’ attitudes towards psychiatry. There have been many articles published exploring the reasons why medical students and junior doctors are deterred from pursuing psychiatry as a career. Factors identified include a perceived lack of scientific basis for psychiatric practice, that psychiatry is removed from ‘real medicine’, the perception that patients do not improve or get better, students’ concerns about overidentifying with patients and the perceived low status.
of psychiatry within the profession.\textsuperscript{1,7-14} We were also aware from observations and local unpublished work that even following medical school psychiatric placements students are often not aware of the multiple career strands within psychiatry. They also sometimes struggle to appreciate the role of the psychiatrist within patient journeys, and so cannot identify with the reality of what a career as a psychiatrist may entail.

Summer school programme

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust ran their first summer school in July 2012 designed by the authors of this article. When devising the programme the team spent time seeking clarity of the purpose of the summer school, which was encompassed in our aims and objectives. The vision was to create an event that did not replicate medical school experience but that aimed to specifically target factors known to negatively influence students and buffer against these, in addition to also nurturing interested students by including items that are felt to attract students towards psychiatry. We aimed to positively influence students' attitudes and communicate psychiatry as a stimulating and challenging yet rewarding specialty that requires compassionate and skilled doctors who have an important role in assessing and managing patients. The target audience were medical students with an interest in psychiatry, but who had not decided on their career trajectory. Although clinical experience is vital in positively influencing medical student attitudes, it was felt that within a 3-day event we were unlikely to be able to incorporate any meaningful patient content without compromising other aspects of the programme. We aimed to evaluate this event through measuring its impact on students' career intentions and attitudes towards psychiatry.

Each item within the programme (see online Appendix DS1) was included for the value it could add in communicating a positive message about careers in psychiatry. We were particularly careful to ensure that we highlighted the role of the doctor, the positive challenge involved in assessing and managing cases of complexity and diagnostic uncertainty, the privilege and importance of the doctor–patient experience and a sense of therapeutic optimism through recovery. We selectively involved clinicians who could contribute not only their expertise but who also communicated enthusiasm and professionalism, bearing in mind that the recruitment literature highlights the importance of positive role modelling.\textsuperscript{4,15} We also focused on allowing the students opportunities to build relationships with the clinicians involved in the event. Aware that our programme therefore also looked at this within our analysis.

We administered the questionnaire using TurningPoint (version 4.2.4.1012 Capacity 5, which is an interactive audience participation software programme that is integrated within PowerPoint 2007, using Windows XP Professional. Students were allocated a number to track changes in their attitudes while maintaining anonymity. Embedding the questionnaire within the opening and closing sessions of the event ensured a 100% response rate. We then planned to compare the mean ATP-30 scores using a paired $t$-test.

Results

Participants

The summer school was attended by 19 students from various medical schools across the country (Table 1). They ranged in age from 19 to 35 and the majority (74%, $n=14$) were female. All attended UK medical schools and the majority (89%, $n=17$) spoke English as their first language.

Attitudes towards psychiatry

The ATP-30 scores showed that our summer school students already had relatively high baseline scores demonstrating positive attitudes towards psychiatry. The mean ATP-30 score before the summer school was 119 (s.d. = 9.8). Despite these positive initial attitudes, the students were not certain of their career intentions, with only 47% definitely or probably indicating their intent to pursue psychiatry as a career prior to the summer school. There was a notable increase in mean ATP-30 score after the summer school, by 9 points, to a total of 128 (s.d. = 10.6, Fig. 1).

As the results were normally distributed we used a paired $t$-test to compare the ATP-30 mean difference scores before (119) and after (128) the event. Despite the high baseline scores we demonstrated a highly statistically
significant positive increase in attitudes towards psychiatry ($t = 5.40$, d.f. = 18, $P < 0.001$) following the event.

We also demonstrated a positive shift in career intention with an increase to 68% ($n=13$) definitely or probably wanting to pursue psychiatry as a career. At the end of the event none of the students had rejected psychiatry nor did any remain unsure whether to consider it as a potential career (Fig. 2).

Details of response

We looked closely at areas within the ATP-30 to analyse potential specific influences of our programme. We note that the ATP-30, as mentioned previously, does not have proven validity for specific items, but we feel this was an important way to break down our results further, and this has been done previously within the literature. It is important to note that none of the 30 attitudinal statements showed a decrease in score from baseline. They all either remained at the same level or shifted, becoming more positive towards psychiatry.

Items with the lowest baseline scores

(a) These days psychiatry is the most important part of the curriculum in medical schools.
(b) The majority of students report that their psychiatric undergraduate training has been very valuable.
(c) Psychiatry is a respected branch of medicine.

This appears to show that although most students at our summer school were in their preclinical years, they were still unsure about psychiatry's place in medical school and the medical arena as a whole.

Items with the highest baseline scores

(a) Psychiatric illness deserves at least as much attention as physical illness.
(b) It is interesting to try and unravel the causes of a psychiatric illness.
(c) The practice of psychiatry allows the development of really rewarding relationships with people.

Before the summer school, as expected, those areas scoring highest revealed an inherent interest in some of the factors that make psychiatry unique.

Items with the largest increase in score

(a) It is quite easy for me to accept the efficacy of psychiatry.
(b) Psychiatry is a respected branch of medicine.
(c) Psychiatry has very little scientific information to go on.
(d) Psychiatrists tend to be at least as stable as the average doctor.
(e) Psychiatric patients are often more interesting to work with than other patients.

Results suggest that our programme seemed to have a particular influence on the perception of the specialty's standing in medicine and as a scientific discipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical school year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>4 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>10 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>5 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age, years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤20</td>
<td>6 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–25</td>
<td>10 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–30</td>
<td>2 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥36</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>17 (89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>15 (79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Demographic data

Fig 1 Mean Attitudes Toward Psychiatry (ATP-30) scores at the beginning and end of the summer school.

Fig 2 Participants’ answers regarding choosing psychiatry as a career at the beginning and end of summer school.
Psychotherapy.

Discussion

These results suggest that a non-clinical summer school positively portraying psychiatry can have a significant impact on medical students’ attitudes towards the specialty. The mean baseline ATP-30 score of 119 (s.d. = 9.8) in our sample of students is higher than baseline scores seen in other medical student populations. For example the mean baseline ATP-30 for fourth-year medical students in one study was 102.6 (s.d. = 10.1) and in another study sixth-form school pupils had a mean baseline of 110 (s.d. = 12.8). We were surprised that in spite of their initial high ATP-30 scores this short intervention still produced a significant positive shift in attitude and had an influence on students’ apparent career intentions.

We feel this is evidence that summer schools can be effective in influencing students’ opinions. Previous research has suggested that clinical encounters are pivotal in influencing students and changing career intentions. However, our carefully designed programme suggests that patient contact in this type of event is not essential. We believe this is because the programme compensated by focusing on bringing to life patient experiences through cases, highlighting recovery, emphasising an empathetic approach and having workshops that included case studies that embodied the role of the psychiatrist in patient journeys. Through not including face-to-face clinical time the programme was able to focus and target areas known to deflect students from psychiatry.

We also found attitudes were changed to a varying degree, and feel this shows that the emphasis of the summer school programme is important. There are already identified aspects, so called ‘push factors’, which make psychiatry less appealing and our baseline scores highlighted one of these especially, regarding psychiatry’s portrayal within the wider medical landscape. It is important to tailor programmes to positively portraying psychiatry can have a significant impact on medical students’ attitudes towards psychiatry increasing more than others. We also have learnt that having less focus on psychotherapy and talking therapies in general has meant that we did not create opportunities to positively change students’ opinions, and therefore did not seem to influence this aspect on evaluation. It is important to note that although there were a few items on the ATP-30 where the score did not increase, there were no areas of the students’ attitudes that we appear to have had a negative impact on.

Implications

Further evaluation of the longitudinal impact of such interventions needs to be explored, in order to see whether such attitudinal changes are sustained. There is evidence in previous studies that attitudes are subject to erosion and alteration at specific points of undergraduate and postgraduate training. This is especially true when considering the stage of training of the delegates, none of whom were in the final years of medical training.

Consideration needs to be given to strategies where the positive experiences of summer schools can be reinforced throughout their medical training. This is an important early influence and contact point. It may be that summer school reunions, using social media to form networks or more formal mentor arrangements could sustain the positive influence over time. We feel summer schools are important and play a part alongside other positive under-graduate experiences of the specialty. We believe they can produce a cumulative effect on influencing students’ positive intentions to pursue psychiatry as a career and that summer schools have a legitimate part to play in the recruitment strategy.

About the authors

Dr Sharon Beattie is a specialty trainee year 5 in general adult psychiatry in Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. Dr Clare Lister is a core trainee year 2 in psychiatry in Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. Ms Julie May Khan is the medical education manager for Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. Dr Peter L. Cornwall is deputy medical director for Tees and was previously the director of medical education for Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

References


## Appendix DS1
### Summer school 2012 programme: content and qualitative comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Objective/summary</th>
<th>Delegate feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>School opened by the director of medical education to instil a sense of the importance of the event, framing the programme while ‘breaking the ice.’</td>
<td>‘Starting at basics and getting an idea of how psychiatry evolved.’ ‘Good overview and history of psychiatry.’ ‘It was interesting to find out how psychiatry evolved – good introduction to the day.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychiatry: the past and present</strong></td>
<td>Setting the scene. From the roots to current practice; highlighting the advance of science and growing evidence base.</td>
<td>‘Informal, personal perspective made it very interesting.’ ‘Gave a good picture of becoming a psychiatrist.’ ‘Real insight into life in psychiatry.’ ‘Cleared up concerns about psychiatry’s role in medicine.’ ‘Good to see how psychiatry is connected to more the physical medical bit.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The glamour of psychiatry</strong></td>
<td>The importance of the role of the psychiatrist. Eradicating myths and dealing with stigma within and outside of the medical arena.</td>
<td>‘Engaging scenes, I found it really helpful to be able to see how personality disorder affect the patient’s life.’ ‘Very engaging, emotive; generally brilliant.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The medicine/psychiatry interface</strong></td>
<td>The ‘medical’ psychiatrist and how psychiatry interacts with other disciplines in medicine.</td>
<td>‘I loved the dramatisation – that gave me the best insight and understanding into psychiatry that I’ve had so far.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dramatisation of personality disorder</strong></td>
<td>A short piece of professionally commissioned drama aimed at communicating patient experience of personality disorder while also facilitating discussion around diagnosis and treatment approaches. This aimed to show the wide-reaching impact of mental disorder and bring to life the patient experience. Students were given a chance to ask the actors questions in character and to ask actors what it felt like to portray and ‘become’ people with such problems. Emphasising the human component to psychiatry.</td>
<td>‘Gave a new way of looking at films and TV.’ ‘Good insight into public perspective of conditions.’ ‘Engaging, made me think a lot about the different mental illnesses.’ ‘Really good session which was educational and fun!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychiatry film club</strong></td>
<td>Looked at stigma and attitudes of the media industry in portraying people with mental health problems, and the psychiatrists caring for them. To reflect on how they may shape the public’s beliefs. To teach some elements of the mental state examination in an engaging way. Addressing public perception of psychiatry, both positive and negative.</td>
<td>‘Interesting perspective into personality and understanding yourself.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training in psychiatry</strong></td>
<td>What it is like to train in psychiatry and the current career pathways. Emphasising the pathway but also the opportunities within psychiatric training.</td>
<td>‘Interesting perspective into personality and understanding yourself.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research in psychiatry</strong></td>
<td>An introduction to the exciting advances that are being made in psychiatry, but also the nuances which make research in psychiatry a unique challenge. Reinforcing the scientific underpinning of psychiatry.</td>
<td>‘Really exploratory. Made me think a lot.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clinical case presentations</strong></td>
<td>Case presentations by higher trainees that were used to highlight the role of psychiatrists in diagnostic challenges and managing complex cases. Presented by higher trainees to display some complexities psychiatrists faced. Allowing the students to experience the dilemmas and rewarding aspects of real patient care.</td>
<td>‘Exciting, animated, detailed, pitching at right level – interesting and challenging case.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychometric testing</strong></td>
<td>To demonstrate that someone’s psychological make-up can have an influence on the kind of doctor they may become. An appreciation of their personality preferences and the chance to take something away that they had learnt about themselves.</td>
<td>‘Engaging, interesting, insight into work within specialties and with individuals.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speed dating (followed by a free evening meal at Durham Restaurant with consultants and trainees)</strong></td>
<td>Opportunity to meet a diverse range of consultants and higher trainees from different specialties which allowed them to explore these at each station. This was aimed at enabling them to dispel myths but also appreciate and gain more knowledge of the breadth of psychiatry.</td>
<td>‘Understanding interaction between people of different personality types, very informative.’ ‘Interesting perspective into personality and understanding yourself.’ ‘I found out I was an introvert – I get it now!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parallel clinical workshops (addictions, post-traumatic stress disorder/eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing, perinatal, psychotherapy, forensic)</strong></td>
<td>These were designed to give the students a greater insight into clinical work through presentation of patient journeys, with a focus on the role of the psychiatrist and patient recovery.</td>
<td>‘Interesting, animated, detailed, pitching at right level – interesting and challenging case.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quizzes</strong></td>
<td>To show the complexities and knowledge needed to practice psychiatry, but in a fun and relaxed way.</td>
<td>‘Wide range of specialities, lots of good advice and an insight in a very short space of time!’ ‘I felt highly involved because of the 1:1 interactions. I was also able to ask questions to suit my needs.’ ‘Speed dating was a brilliant way to get to know a little bit about each topic.’ ‘They (the consultants) were enthusiastic, honest and open.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closing with essential feedback</strong></td>
<td>Event closed by director of medical education.</td>
<td>‘The individual workshops were very informative and a good opportunity to see subsets of psychiatry I wouldn’t normally have been exposed to.’ ‘She (perinatal psychiatrist) was informative but very kind and lovely to watch.’ ‘New information well presented by someone who was clearly passionate and motivated.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Sharon Beattie, Clare Lister, Julie May Khan and Peter L. Cornwall
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