



Lighten The Load: Night Doctors' Morning Wellbeing Check

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Background

Junior doctors (JMOs) working night shifts are a vulnerable group, with high levels of stress, anxiety¹ and poor sleep. Limited after-hours support and challenging night shifts may contribute to lower JMO retention². Initiatives supporting this at-risk group are required.

Poor junior doctor mental health has a negative impact on...

- The doctor themselves
- The patients^{3,4}
- The organization

"Distressed & unwell doctors have higher rates of attrition & decreased rates of workplace efficiency & productivity"⁵

Aim

'Lighten the load' of the emotional toll of night shifts and promote collegiality, better sleep and overall wellbeing. Identify potential clinical or operational areas for improvement within the workplace.

JMO Feedback

"There are few other avenues to tell people about what happened on night shift, and have somebody care."

"It's a good way to debrief and get perspective in a safe environment."

"The chance to debrief with a colleague is invaluable and stops you going home to ruminate."

Method

An optional morning wellbeing check for all doctors after night shift was trialed each weekday for Registrar term 3 (July to October) 2019. Senior advanced trainees met with junior doctors to provide peer support. If required, critical issues were escalated via pre-existing pathways. Data was collected after each interaction. All junior doctors were surveyed after the trial period.

References

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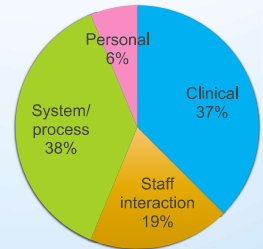
Results

Lighten the Load was utilised 15 times over 13 weeks. All JMOs involved in the initiative felt more supported and the majority agreed it improved their overall wellbeing and helped their clinical and professional practice. Two system issues requiring escalation were uncovered. All JMOs who responded to the post trial survey (33 Registrars, 24 RMOs) agreed Lighten the Load should continue. Written feedback demonstrated JMOs highly value the program for support, debriefing & comradery. There was no consensus on the optimal format (timing, place and frequency) for Lighten the Load.

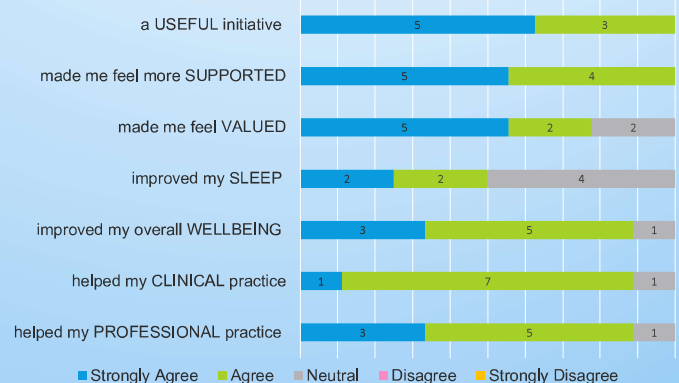
Interaction Type



Specific Issue Type



JMO Perceptions of Lighten the Load



Conclusion

Junior doctors highly value regular access to peer support, especially when working night shifts.

Lighten the Load, a night doctors morning wellbeing check, is a useful initiative that is simple and low cost. This trial demonstrates that such initiatives are likely to have a positive impact on JMOs sense of support, value, wellbeing & may improve clinical & professional practice. Lighten the Load also identified areas of service improvement and therefore has potential to positively impact patient care.

More research is required to optimise the format of such wellbeing initiatives and explore the impact on doctor's and patient outcomes.