

A Scheme for Supporting Doctors who have become ill

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Mentoring in Medicine
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Aims of workshop

- to share experience of identifying and mentoring ill doctors
- to describe the system we have developed to support trainees in who have become ill
- to explore roles and responsibilities
- to identify markers of good practice as a mentor

What challenges does the ill doctor face?

What challenges does the mentor face?
groups - 15 minutes

Plenary feedback - 10 minutes

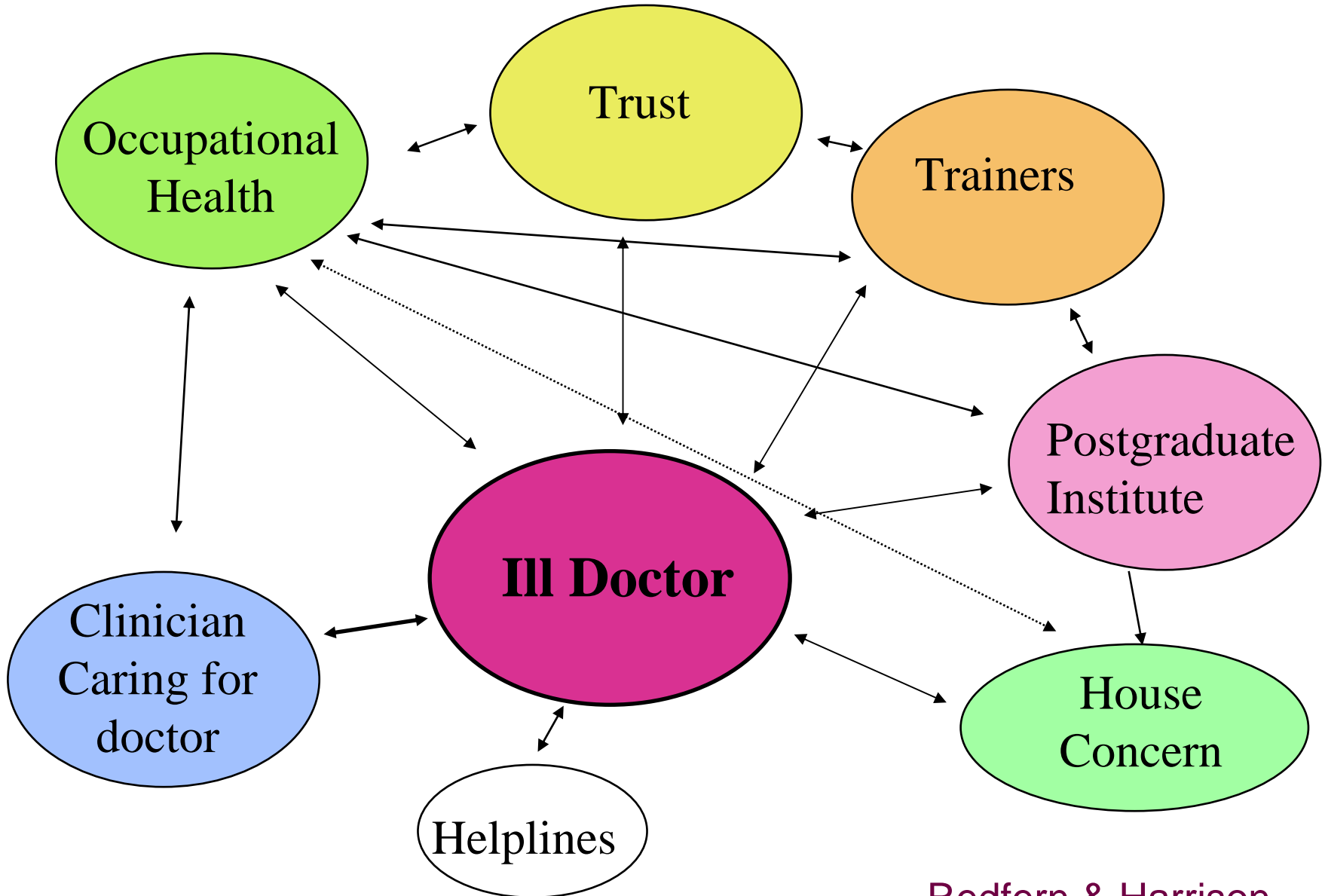
So what is the mentor's role?

Aim of the service

to enable doctor to achieve his/her full potential by

- Assisting with a return to work, if the doctor has had a period of sick leave
- Defining the doctor's capability for achievement in a good environment
- Enabling the doctor to tackle challenging situations

DOCTORS WITH ILL HEALTH OR DISABILITY



The Occupational Physician

The trainee is required to have contact with the Occupational Physician at least every 6 months

- An Occupational Health Appointment with the flexible traineeor
- Contact between the clinician caring for the flexible trainee as a patient and the occupational health department to ensure that their health needs are the same and are still being appropriately managed at work

If a trainee does not attend appointments, work-related factors in the illness, their continued eligibility for flexible training on ill health grounds will require investigating

Our underlying ethos

- to understand
- to explain
- to design and deliver an appropriate intervention

Aim to help the individual get back to safe, effective practice

The Occupational Physician

Identifies

- work-related factors in the illness
- necessary interventions in the working arrangements or the work environment

Responsibility to the employer to advise on fitness for work
‘reasonable adjustment’

Responsibility to individual to advise on natural history of the illness and potential effects on work
be an advocate

The Associate Dean

listen to the doctor's perception of

- present situation
- training needs
- professional and personal goals

agree a short term plan of action

get advice from occupational health

help identify suitable placements & construct an educational programme

The Associate Dean

provide longer term support and advice to trainers and trainees

identify barriers to the completion of training/return to previous practice

review

- progress
- career goals
- potential adjustments to training programmes

Illnesses

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Psychological - depression/manic depression/steroid related	42
Stress - work/financial/attacked/ family/bullied	21
Diabetes	3
Multiple sclerosis	4
Malignancy	3
Hypertension	1
IVF/pregnancy related	3
Migraine	3

55 Females 22 Males 1997-2003

(37.4% SpRs are female in the Northern Deanery)

Illnesses

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Drug/alcohol abuse	4
Rheumatoid Arthritis	3
Hip/knee/back problem	5
Myocardial Infarction	1
Epilepsy	1
Chronic fatigue /Post-viral syndrome	3
Viral meningitis	1
Ulcerative colitis	1
Other	
Unwilling to continue full time (job-share)	5

55 Females 22 Males 1997-2003

Specialties

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Anaesthesia

Obstetrics & Gynaecology

Psychiatry

Paediatrics

Laboratory medicine

A&E

PRHO/Medical student

General Practice

Public Health

Specialties

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Orthopaedic surgery

General surgery

Urology

ENT

Oncology

General Medicine

Care of the elderly

Cardiology

Clinical Genetics

Palliative care

Gastro-enterology

Progress and outcomes

Exam success	14(+)
Promotion	9
Interdeanery transfer	3
Returned to full time	14
Consultant	4(+)
General Practice	>7
Staff grade/Assoc specialist	2
Used scheme to return to medicine	2
Left medicine	4
Ill health retirement	3
Died (malignancy)	2

55 Females 22 Males 1997-2003

So what have we learned?

Generally, there is a low level of understanding amongst Deans, Programme Directors, other educational leads & Educational Supervisors about how to manage ill health in trainee doctors

Coping with chronic physical illness includes

- the illness itself
- the effects of treatment
- psychological sequelae

The importance of trust

- respect of the individual
- confidentiality
- identifying and meeting the needs of senior clinicians
- telling the truth

So what have we learned?

Feeling ill, recognising there is a problem & reporting the problem happen at different times

Trainees who do well learn to

- recognise symptoms
- use support appropriately
- value what they can do

It takes about 2 years for an ill trainee to get back to full achievement

- get well first
- only make career moves when the trainee is moving to something better & not away from something bad

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What are the mentor's role & responsibilities?

If the mentor was doing this really well, what would be happening?

group work - 10 minutes

3 key learning points
Good practice for Mentors

A Mentor can help the person to

- recognise they are ill and get treatment
- recognise triggers for illness, & develop an understanding of his/her illness
- return to work
- learn how & to whom to report illness
- manage the natural curiosity of others
- identify & possibly avoid role conflict
- manage difficult working relationships
- seek honest feedback and use this effectively
- make realistic career plans, & prepare for interviews/assessments

Nancy Redfern

Indemnity/ duties of a doctor

'A patient of mine is a doctor; I am concerned that he has a drinking problem which could affect his judgement. It has taken a long time to get him to admit to any problems & if I disclose the information to his employer or the GMC now he will probably deny everything and find another doctor. What should I do?'

GMC Confidentiality: Protecting & Providing Information

The patient has the same right to good care and to confidentiality as other patients. But there are times when the safety of others must take precedence. If you are concerned that his problems mean that he is an immediate danger to his own patients, you must tell his employing authority or the GMC straight away. If you think the problem is currently under control, you must encourage him to seek help locally from counselling services (for doctors or the public). You must monitor his condition and ensure that if the position deteriorates you take immediate action to protect the patients in his care.

GMC Confidentiality: Protecting & Providing Information

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