EFPT health-seeking attitudes and existing support services for psychiatric trainees

Ema Conde1, Alice Lomax1, Telma Santos1, Sonila Tomori1, Thomas Pattyn1, Celina Skjødt1, Teelia Rolko1, Laura Shtane1, Sigita Rozanskiene1, Sigita Rozanskiene1, Egle Biliute1, Liana Kobylnska1, Branimir Radmanovic1, Sonja Virag1, Sara Meier1, Bojana Rueegg1, Romy Jost1, and Deniz Ceylan1


Abstract

Introduction: Concern for medical doctors’ health has been widely recognized over the past ten years. EFPT is aware of the heterogeneity of support set up for doctors in distress and recognizes the need for further cross-Europe research. This project aims to gather information and carry out research in order to improve services for physician health Europe-wide.

Objectives: The “HELP Project” was designed to investigate psychiatry trainees’ perceptions of and attitudes towards health seeking at a Europe-wide scale. Furthermore, it aims to determine what services are available in Europe specifically to support physicians’ health.

Methods: This is a multinational, cross-sectional survey conducted in 14 European countries. Data collection was accomplished by an anonymous online or hard-copy questionnaire. Completion implied consent to participate.

Results: Of the respondent trainees, 98% said they would have surgery in the public sector, versus 42.3% who agree to get treatment there for an eating disorder, for depression (28.8%) or for addiction (17.3%). Trainees from developing economies were significantly less confident in using public sector help for mental health difficulties. Specific services for doctors only exist in the UK, Spain, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

Discussion and Conclusions: It was striking that for surgical and general medical problems, the majority of trainees would use public sector help, however, for psychiatric illness and substance use disorders, trainees tended to prefer the private sector or said they would not seek help or tell anyone at all. When asked for advice regarding the same problems in their fellow trainees, they said they would recommend public sector help, suggesting doctors may be reluctant to seek help in situations in which they would advise others to seek help. The EFPT believes specialised physician health services are needed to ensure doctors seek help when necessary, while avoiding feeling stigmatised or punished in doing so, particularly in mental health disorders.