

## Fellowship Report (Jan 2023)

I applied for a role in the International Support Team. This role appealed to me for a few reasons. Although I am not an international graduate, I have spent a lot of time living and working abroad. I am aware that moving to a host country causes many difficulties, chiefly in terms of culture shock in adjusting to new work and home settings. The sense of isolation and desire for connectivity can be acute. I was excited and motivated to get involved to help where I could. IMGs now make up over 50% of our GP trainees, so supporting them and understanding their needs has never been more urgent.

Aside from working on my own project, I was very fortunate to be able to meet many international trainees, both working in my area and in other areas in Wessex. I also helped to co-facilitate at the induction days. This was another opportunity for learning, understanding and supporting the IMG trainees across Wessex Deanery. I was also able to lead and facilitate a run session on well being in a culture in practice learning set.

My main project focused on how to best support GP trainers in their role as IMG trainers in medical practice. This was a joint project that I completed with Dr Ramona Mascas and Dr Mary Udo.

We designed a survey to identify how GP trainers can best support and facilitate IMGs' transition from trainee doctor to competent independent General Practitioners (GPs). The survey was an online questionnaire, which was composed of closed and open questions, as well as free text to explore trainers' opinions and attitudes towards IMGs in order to identify how best to support their training needs.

Most trainers felt that the biggest area of focus of support should be in the areas of NHS culture and UK culture, followed by communication and language skills.

In terms of the trainers' needs the top priorities were having a more detailed knowledge of the trainees' previous experience, more time, education and training to support IMGs. We submitted an abstract for poster presentation to the ' Levelling the Field' conference in November 2022. This was entitled 'Understanding GP trainers' views on supporting international graduate GP trainees.' We also intend to submit our poster to the RCGP.

As an extension to my fellowship, I planned and delivered a learning session for the international trainees entitled 'How to improve your wellbeing.'

The talk was well attended and focused on learning how to pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness) and also stressed the importance of generosity and connecting with others in order to support wellbeing. I incorporated a few practical exercises so that the trainees could put theory into practice and learn how to feel less overwhelmed and more in control of their day. The talk went very well, I had a lot of positive feedback which was wonderful. I was thanked for helping the trainees to develop better personal coping mechanisms.

I felt this was an important area to address as life is not just about work. Having spoken to some trainees, there was the real feeling that they needed to prove themselves, to do more, the pressure is immense. They are often isolated, with little or no social safety net. Working away from family and friends means that they are rarely able to access the resources or time that they need to rest. Added to this, not only is the pace of life stressful and complex but the pandemic has added to our sense of isolation through social disruption. We also have the added concerns of the war in Ukraine, ongoing economic uncertainty, inflation and climate change just to name a few! By learning to become mindful, I wanted to show how it is possible to learn to take mini breaks throughout the day, helping to relax and rejuvenate.

The fellowship study budget has allowed me to train to become a mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) teacher. I started this program in September 2022 and it will probably take me 2 years to complete. I have also been working with a careers coach. This helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses and possible future career directions.

Finally Ramona, Mary and I have become good friends, so this is a really great and unexpected outcome of the fellowship.

Overall, it has been so lovely to have another focus, other than my day to day GP work. I would not have been able to do any of this without the support of HEE through funding this fellowship. I also want to thank Katie Collins specifically for allowing me to become involved in this program. Thank you also to Sam Scallan for spending time with me on the hottest days of August to help me analyse my data. I appreciate the summer holidays are precious and that freely giving your time to help me was an act of great generosity!

Summary of key achievements

Gaining confidence in presenting and as the lead presenter

Helping to facilitate IMG induction and communication workshops

Running my own teaching session

Learning to facilitate remotely

Empowering GP trainees to improve their well being

Development of IT skills

Understanding research

Designing a survey

Analysing qualitative & quantitative data

Completion of the Edward Jenner management programme

Abstract acceptance at the Medics Academy

Making new friends

Training to be an MBSR teacher

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Dr Eleanor Bessant