

Exploring the barriers and facilitators to help-seeking by GPs: Improving Access to Support

Information Booklet for GPs

Helping you decide whether or not to take part in our study

We would like to invite you to take part in our study.

However, we want to be sure you know what is involved, so please read this leaflet carefully.

You are being invited to take part in a research study which is being conducted by the University of Bristol in conjunction with Keele University, University College London, and the Practitioner Health Programme in London. Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. PLEASE TAKE TIME TO READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY. Do talk to others about your decision if you wish.

Part 1 tells you the purpose of the study and what will happen if you take part

Part 2 gives you more detailed information about the conduct of the study

Part 1

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This is a qualitative study aiming to identify the barriers and facilitators to accessing support and well-being services for General Practitioners (GPs) who are experiencing stress/burnout and/or reduced emotional or mental well-being. We would like to speak to any GPs who have a view about the stresses of working in general practice. This includes GPs who have not personally experienced such problems but are interested in the topic, those who are working despite having such problems, GPs who are on sick leave, GPs who have returned to work, GPs who have retired due to stress or reduced well-being.

2. Why are we interested in talking to GPs about this topic?

High stress and reduced well-being are common amongst doctors, including GPs. This group are more likely to experience reduced well-being and mental health symptoms, including anxiety, low mood, depression, stress and burnout. Despite this, the evidence suggests that the NHS workforce, including doctors, have insufficient access and face barriers to mainstream healthcare provision for such problems. To date, little research has focused on the mental health of the NHS workforce, including doctors working in general practice.

Consequently, identifying what helps or hinders GPs around seeking support for stress related problems, including accessing timely, good quality care and enabling a return to work, is crucial in ensuring the health and well-being of doctors are met. Undertaking this research will enable us to understand the barriers and facilitators to help-seeking, and therefore to identify solutions, so that current and future GPs can access suitable care and support when necessary.

3. Why have I been chosen?

We have approached you because you are a General Practitioner

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

5. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please return the reply slip to the researcher.

Depending on your preference, the researcher will then contact you to arrange a time and place to meet with you to conduct an interview, either a face-to-face or over the telephone.

At this point, the researcher will explain what the study is about and will give you the opportunity to ask any questions, if you wish. You will have further time to think about whether you would like to participate or not. If you decide to participate the researcher will ask for your written consent. A copy will be given to you to keep, and the researcher will keep a copy.

6. What do I have to do?

If you agree to take part, a researcher will interview you and ask questions to understand the causes of stress or reduced well-being for a GP, your experiences of seeking help and support, and your preferences for support and service provision in the future. The researchers will audio-record the interview. The interview will take up to one hour to conduct, either face-to-face or by phone, at a mutually convenient time and location.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in the study?

One disadvantage is the time it takes you to participate. However, we will reimburse you for the time involved in taking part in this study. You will be paid £80 per hour to cover your time.

Another potential disadvantage of taking part is that talking about your experiences of help-seeking for mental illness or stress and burnout may be distressing. If you wish to speak to someone following any issues raised in this interview, please contact the 24 hour BMA Counselling service on: 08459 200 169 (landline: 01455 254 189) - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For doctors living in London, we advise you to contact the NHS Practitioner Health Programme on 020 3049 4505. This is a free and confidential service for doctors with a mental health, addiction or physical health problem affecting their work. Alternatively, please contact your GP or we can provide you with the contact details of GP specialists on the study team who will be willing to speak to you and advise you accordingly.

If you disclose any experiences of harassment, bullying or victimisation in the workplace during the interview, we will advise you contact your local HR adviser or the BMA who can offer confidential advice on: 0300 123 1233. Harassment, bullying and victimisation in the workplace is illegal. You will be eligible to receive advice or counselling through Human Resources if you wish. If you are a trainee and are experiencing harassment, bullying and victimisation in the workplace, we recommend that you seek advice from your Deanery.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Taking part in this study will enable us understand the barriers and facilitators to help-seeking for mental illness or stress and burnout, and to identify solutions, so that current and future GPs can access suitable care when necessary. Your participation will therefore help to shape the provision of suitable support and care services in the future.

9. Is the study confidential?

Yes, all the information you give us will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. Any information about your mental health and well-being will remain confidential. Data will be anonymised and identifiable to researchers by codes. Neither your name nor details will be reported in any research papers, or to anyone outside the research team.

The study's written reports will include some quotations from the interviews. These will be anonymous, and will not include anyone's names or identifying features. Anonymised

electronic data will be stored on password-protected computers for 5 years, in accordance with University of Bristol guidelines.

10. Limits to confidentiality

The only exception to this confidentiality agreement will be if you disclose information which suggests a risk of serious danger to any person (including yourself). If the researcher has serious concerns about your safety they will discuss this with you where possible and may discuss their concerns with a GP colleague on the study steering group. The research team has a legal obligation to share information with the GMC if you disclose substandard or unsafe practices which unequivocally compromise patient safety. Please note that we will always make every effort to contact you and discuss with you any need to break confidentiality in this way before contacting anyone else.

This completes Part 1 of the Information Sheet. If the information in Part 1 has interested you and you are considering participation, please continue to read the additional information in Part 2 before making any decision.

Part 2

11. What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Your participation is voluntary and if you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw, without giving a reason. However, we need to advise you that you will be unable to withdraw your non identifiable data once recruitment and data collection are complete and analysis is progressing. We can answer any questions about when this is likely to be at the time of the interview.

12. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be published in reports and scientific journals and presented at conferences.

13. Who is organising and funding the study?

The study is being conducted by researchers at the University of Bristol (lead research centre), University College London, Keele University and the Practitioner Health Programme in London. The study has been funded by the National Institute for Health Research National School for Primary Care Research.

14. Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been given a favourable opinion for conduct by the NRES Committee South West – Frenchay (REC number: 15/SW/0350). Research Ethics Committees review research projects to protect participants from unduly risky or unethical research, while also encouraging research of high quality.

15. How to make a complaint.

If you wish to make a formal complaint please contact: Kat Tucker, Complaints and Freedom of Information Manager, NHS Bristol, South Plaza, Marlborough Street, Bristol, BS1 3NX or telephone: 0117 900 2494.

Please keep this copy of the information leaflet.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet

If there is anything you do not understand or if you would like more information, please ring:
Dr Ruth Riley (Principal Investigator) on 0117 928 7296 or email: r.riley@bristol.ac.uk