

LETTERS



SUICIDE WHILE UNDER GMC INVESTIGATION

Doctors' suicides: economic considerations and beyond

Christopher L Manning *convenor, Action for NHS Wellbeing*¹, David Peters *clinical director*², George Lewith *professor*³

¹Teddington, UK; ²University of Westminster, London, UK; ³Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, Southampton University, Southampton, UK

Hawton states that “doctors have long been known to be at risk of suicide.”¹ Each such suicide, aside from all the human suffering and pain, costs about £2m (€2.8m; \$1.5m).² Against this, the General Medical Council’s recommendation for £5m to be spent each year for the next three years to provide healthcare support for all registered doctors is but a drop in the distress ocean.

“Doctors cost £500 000 to train, yet no special account is taken of the public need to safeguard this asset.”³ The economics and recommendations of the GMC report are therefore as familiar as they are wearisome—as are the absence of any mention of the NHS’s duty of care to its employees and the use of the term “commit” in relation to suicide.⁴

Many medical students are already afraid of GMC procedures, and mindfulness and resilience training are being recommended for them.⁵ Yet there is no coherent and systemic strategy to

provide safe, sound, and supportive work contexts for all healthcare professionals in medical education and the wider NHS, and thereby to enable this to happen.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Hawton K. Suicide in doctors while under fitness to practise investigation. *BMJ* 2015;350:h813. (13 February.)
- 2 Knapp M, McDaid M, Parsonage M, eds. Mental health promotion and mental illness prevention: the economic case. PSSRU, LSE and Political Science, 2011.
- 3 Department of Health. Mental health and ill-health in doctors. 2008. www.em-online.com/download/medical_article/36516_DH_083090%5B1%5D.pdf.
- 4 North East London Strategic Health Authority. Report of an independent inquiry into the care and treatment of Daksha Emson MBBS, MRCPsych, MSc and her daughter Freya. 2003. www.simplypsychiatry.co.uk/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/deinquiryreport.pdf.
- 5 All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics. Wellbeing in four policy areas. 2014. <http://parliamentarywellbeinggroup.org.uk>.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2015;350:h1412

© BMJ Publishing Group Ltd 2015