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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Open your mind without leaving your sofa

Nikki Nabavi *editorial scholar, The BMJ*

As we head towards the end of term and the summer holidays, many of you will have had electives or other travel plans cancelled as a result of the ongoing pandemic (doi:10.1136/bmj.n1577). With a hotel quarantine system that is not fit for purpose (<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/06/04/the-uks-hotel-quarantine-system-is-not-fit-for-purpose/>) and a traffic light system that risks letting new variants into the UK (<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/12/covid-19-travel-plan-will-let-new-variants-into-the-uk/>), you might be better off learning about other cultures by reading our series Day in the life of a medical student, which includes this interview with Catarina Rodrigues, a sixth year medical student in Portugal (doi:10.1136/bmj.m4503). Perhaps you are going (virtually) to Mallorca by tuning in to watch the popular reality TV series Love Island, which has introduced stricter mental health checks for its contestants after facing criticism in previous series. “Even in clinical settings, risk prediction is an uncertain business,” writes Ian Hamilton, an academic at the University of York with an interest in addiction and mental health, who asks how well reality TV shows can actually assess risks to contestants’ mental health (<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/06/24/how-well-can-reality-tv-shows-assess-the-risks-to-contestants-mental-health/>).

While “psychologically vulnerable” people may be discouraged from participating in reality TV shows, this same logic should not apply to the workplace—or when entering medical school. Isobel Walker considers how we might dispel the notion that people with a mental illness aren’t “cut out” for the medical profession, and writes that they “should be welcomed into the ranks of medicine” (https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/12/students-with-a-mental-illness-should-be-welcomed-into-the-ranks-of-medicine/?g=w_bmj-com). On a recent episode of Sharp Scratch, the panel was joined by expert guest Declan Hyland, a consultant psychiatrist who is involved with medical school admissions at the University of Liverpool, to discuss panel members’ motivations for studying medicine, and how this might change throughout medical school and life as a doctor. The team also heard from some very special guests, including TV doctor Zoe Williams and England’s chief medical officer Chis Whitty about why they chose medicine (https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/14/so-why-medicine-why-do-you-want-to-be-a-doctor/?g=w_bmj-com).

The Sharp Scratch team also put together a miniseries on LGBTQ+ health, with the help of BMJ Clegg scholar Callum Phillips. Expert guests included the national adviser for LGBT health at NHS England, Michael Brady, and British sexual health and LGBT rights campaigner Lisa Power. The three episodes discuss a range of topics from queerness in medicine ([Spotify](#) or [Apple Pods](#)) to allyship ([Spotify](#) or [Apple Pods](#)), and inclusive practice ([Spotify](#) or [Apple Pods](#)). The covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated LGBTQ+ health inequalities (doi:10.1136/bmj.m4828), so there is no better time to start listening and learning about these issues within healthcare, and about our roles as medical students or junior doctors entering the profession at such a vital time.

Competing interests: NN is a medical student enrolled at the University of Manchester 2017-2023.