

Medical student wellbeing during COVID-19: Stressors, coping strategies and support

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A study using Padlet to gather responses during 4th year palliative medicine workshops

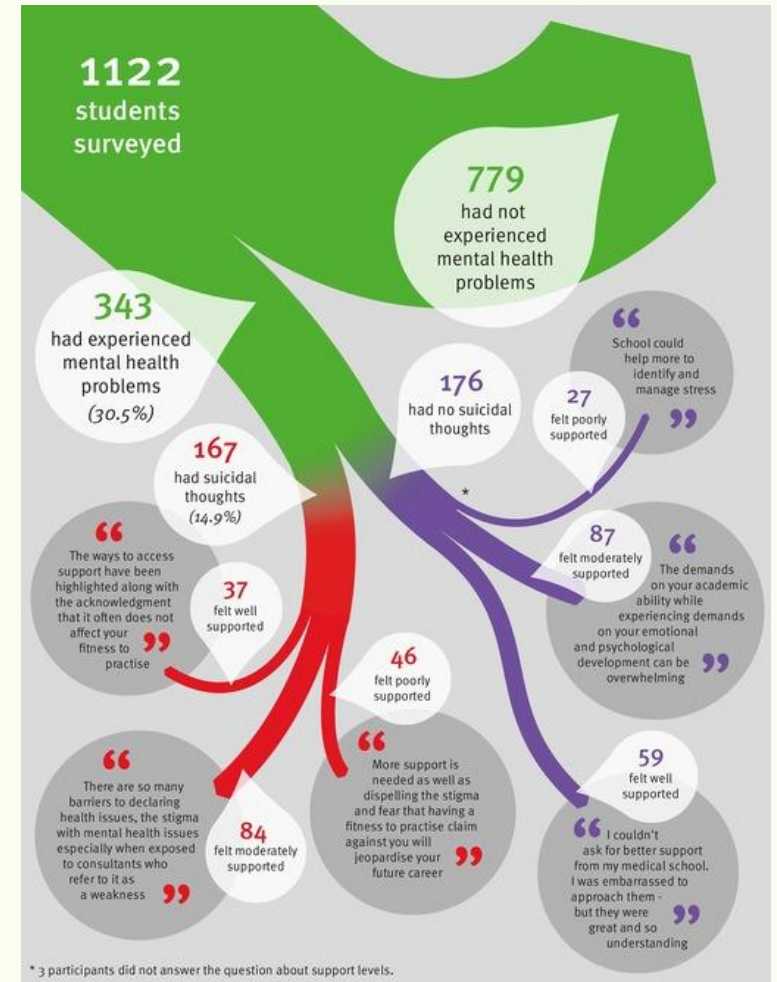
- Background
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion



Medical students' mental health

- Medical students report higher levels psychological distress than same age-peers: stress, depression, anxiety, burnout.
- Associated with: decrease in empathy, thoughts about dropping out of medical school, suicidal ideation, and poor academic performance

(BMA, 2019; Dyrbye et al., 2006; Dyrbye et al., 2011; Hope & Henderson, 2014; Neumann et al., 2011)

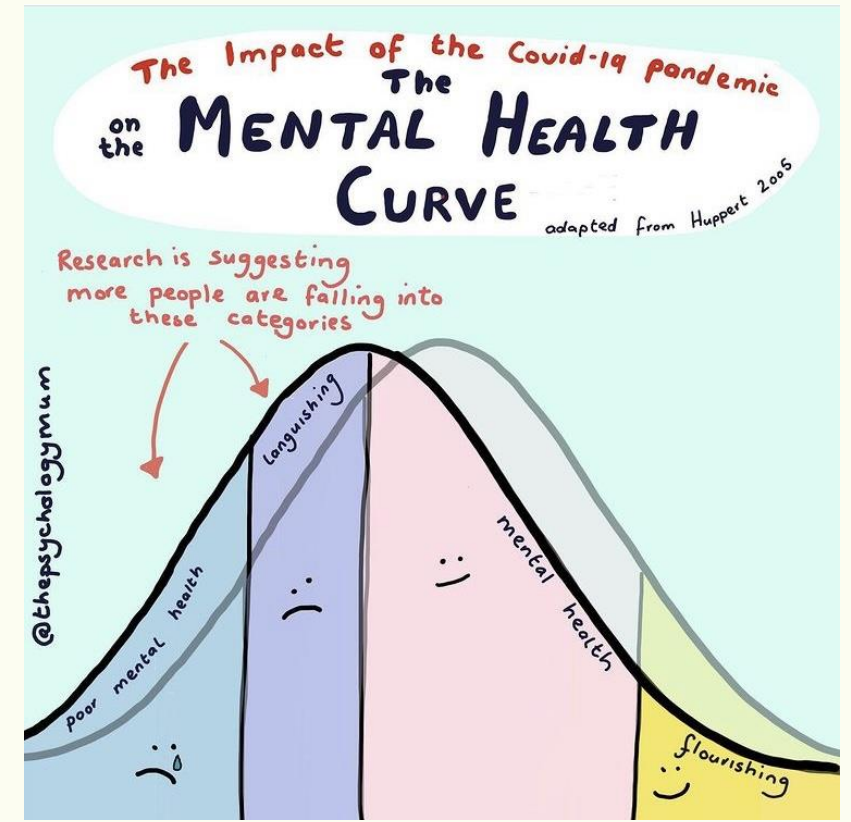


BMJ 2015;351:h4521

Mental wellbeing during COVID-19

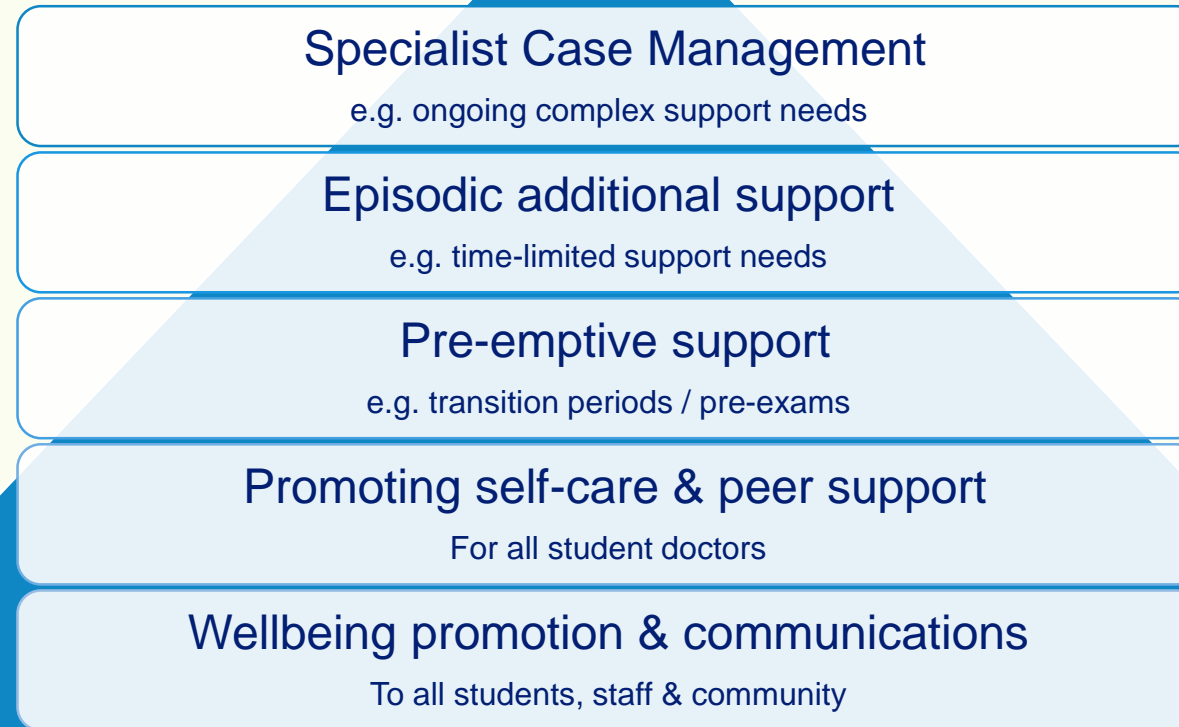
- COVID-19 has increased stressors
e.g. PPE, online learning, social isolation, exposure to death and dying, uncertainty (Sedlák & Al-Wahdani, 2020)
- It also reduced access to coping strategies
- Medical student mental health problems increased: higher levels of stress, anxiety & exhaustion, especially among female students (Mittal et al., 2021)

UKPSF: K3, V4



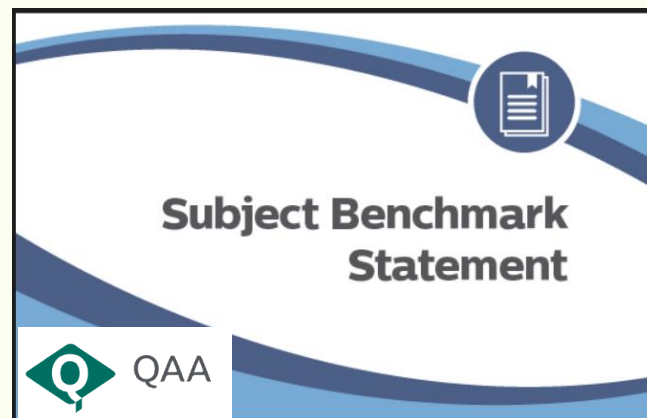
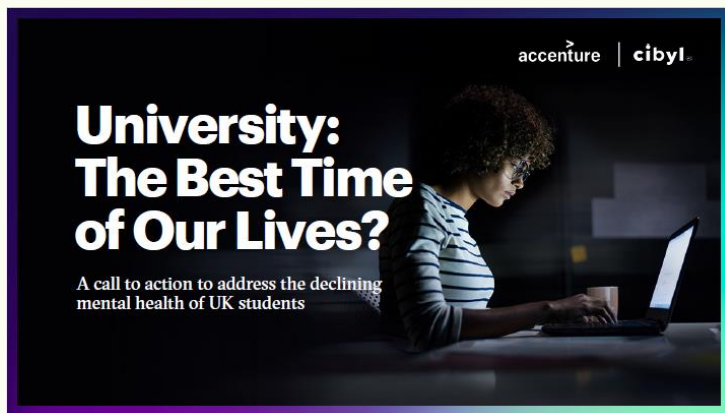
Wellbeing support for medical students

UKPSF: A4, V2



Learning to look after personal mental wellbeing

UKPSF: V4



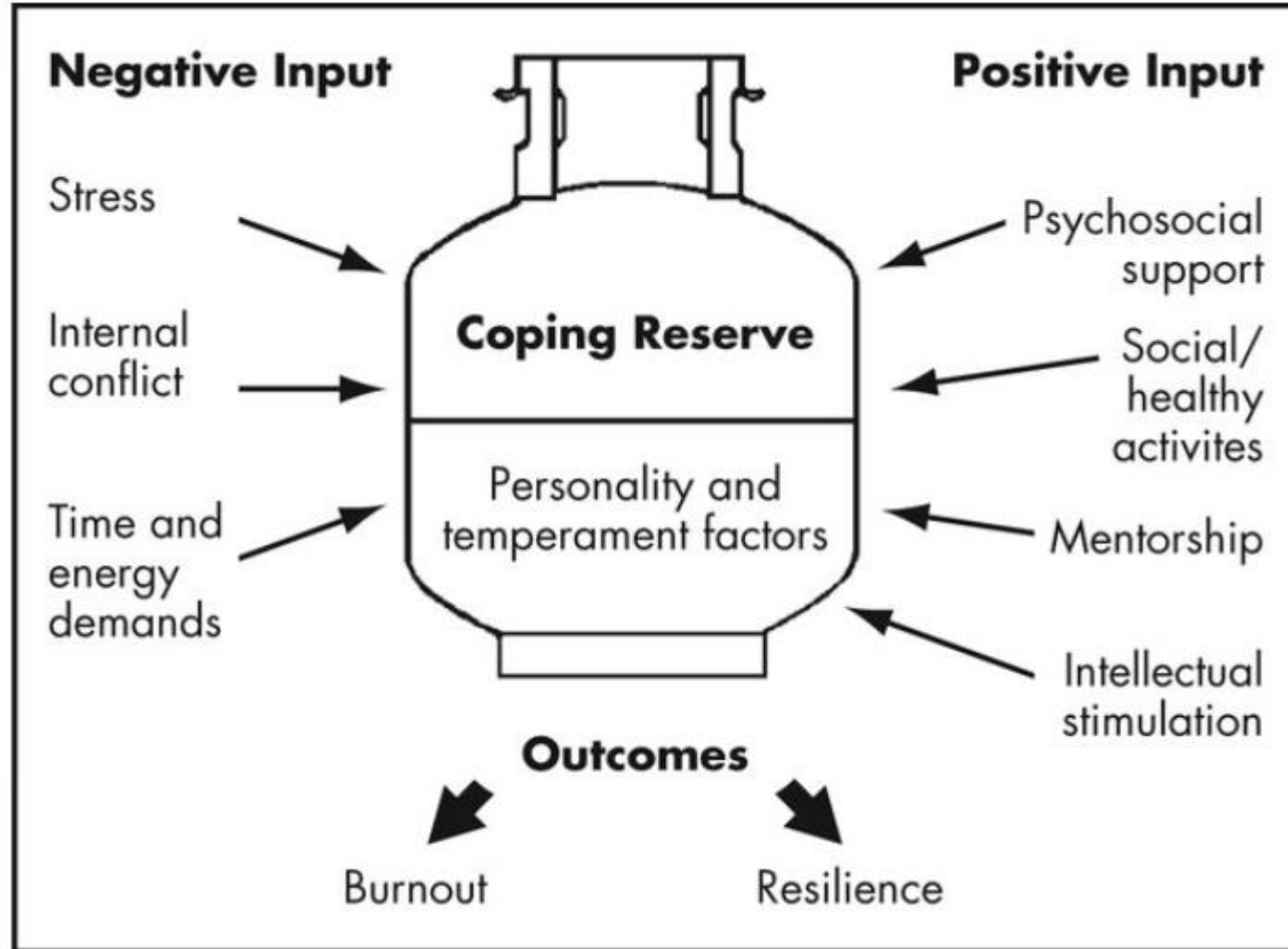
Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

Year 4

Year 5



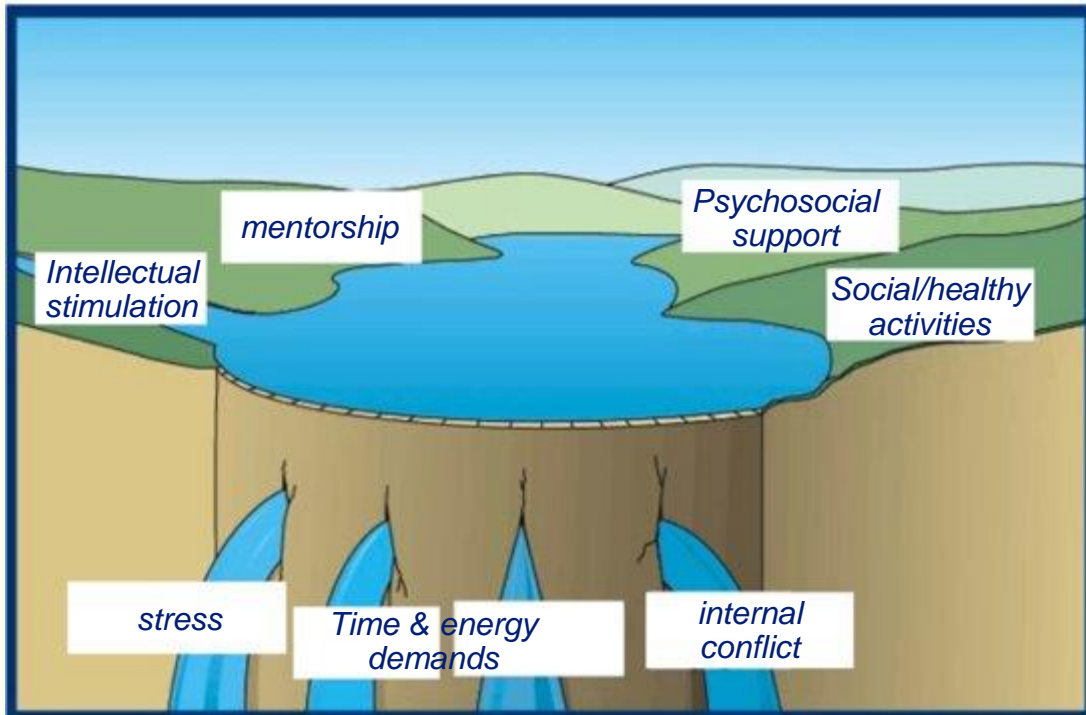
The “Coping Reservoir Model” of mental wellbeing

Dunn, L. B., Iglewicz, A., & Moutier, C. (2008). A Conceptual Model of Medical Student Well-Being: Promoting Resilience and Preventing Burnout. In *Academic Psychiatry* (Vol. 32, Issue 1).

MacArthur, K. R., & Sikorski, J. (2020). A qualitative analysis of the coping reservoir model of pre-clinical medical student well-being: Human connection as making it “worth it.” *BMC Medical Education*, 20(1).

UKPSF: K1, V3

The “coping reservoir” model of mental wellbeing



"Joy, collected over time, fuels resilience – ensuring we'll have reservoirs of emotional strength when hard things do happen"
Professor Brené Brown

Dunn, L. B., Iglewicz, A., & Moutier, C. (2008). A Conceptual Model of Medical Student Well-Being: Promoting Resilience and Preventing Burnout. *Academic Psychiatry* (Vol. 32, Issue 1).

Aims

To explore:

- i) Factors that students perceive as draining and replenishing their mental wellbeing and affecting their level of coping/hope
- ii) The effect of COVID-19 on relational connections with patients, peers and academic staff, and the impact of this upon their mental wellbeing
- iii) Perceptions of support needs; barriers and facilitators to seeking support.

UKPSF: A4-5, K1, V3

Year 4 Palliative Medicine workshop: Developing self-care and maintaining resilience



Panopto Palliative Medicine Resources > Developing self-care and main... medicine workshop day 2021-2 ☆☆☆☆☆ ⬇ ⚙ ⌂ ✎ 📊 Help ▾

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Learning outcomes

- Describe resilience and the importance of maintaining it, particularly in the context of the Y4 palliative medicine placement.
- Develop awareness of effective strategies for self-care and building resilience, based on research evidence and reflecting on personal experiences.
- Appraise your current approach to self-care and resilience, and plan modifications to improve it.

School of Medicine @UoLmedicine

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Details	Developing self-care and maintaining resilience	0:00
Contents	Learning outcomes	0:19
Captions	Padlet link	2:34
Discussion		
Notes	Padlet	2:49

Y4 Palliative Care: Resilience & wellbeing workshop
a place to discuss the topics we're looking at today

Welcome!

IMPORTANT: research study information. Please read!

Resources (please add any you've found useful)

Sources of support

1. One word check-in: How do you feel at the moment?

2. Hopes & fears: What expectations, hopes, concerns and fears do you have about this palliative care placement?

3. What are your stress warning signs?

4. What is 'resilience'?

5. When have you shown resilience?

6. Relational connections: How has COVID-19 affected your relationships with peers, patients, and academic staff? Do you feel that these changes have affected your mental wellbeing, and if so, in what ways?

7. Sources of support: What support (if any) do you think would be helpful to you? What makes it easier or more difficult for you to seek or access support?

8a. What restores and refreshes you?

8b. What drains and depletes you?

9. Resilience plan: What steps will you take during this palliative medicine placement to increase your resilience and mental wellbeing?

Feedback: what worked well?

Feedback: what could be improved?

Thank you for taking part!

Hi everyone, I'm Dr Helen West, a Lecturer in Psychology. I've created this Padlet to give you a place to discuss the topics we're looking at today. It's also somewhere to share useful resources with each other. I've added mine over here →

Please pause the lecture if you need more time to respond (...although I know you have another session after it, so don't pause for too long!)

Thank you very much!

Participant Information Sheet

Participant information sheet Word document pdf file drive

Consent form

Consent form - Dr West Y4 Word document pdf file drive

fatigued

Overeating, overthinking, not being able to sleep, heart racing

None

Keep up to exams and dealing with work / social commitments etc.

Coffee, exercise, sleep, family, the outdoors

unhealthy

Completing this at my own pace

Really enjoyed the fact you

Nothing - excellent session!

PLEASE can this be done more often. It is so helpful seeing that we are not alone.

Nothing, all round great presentation

Maybe more than one session like this over the course of the year: was really nice to get these thoughts down, especially in this anonymous way

It may be useful to do a similar thing for other placements.

Nothing - amazing session. May even be useful to do this again to encourage us to reflect/ see where we are. Or even have a year 4 padlet open all year with different topics open without the worry of the medical school judging/ investigating any students seeking help/ reflecting on any unhelpful coping mechanisms.

Nothing I really liked the session especially being able to see someone who works in the field and their ways of coping with stress

Not just associate this with palliative care but all placements, some students won't get this session until May/June time if they have palliative last

Please don't forget to return your completed consent form. I hope it was helpful to reflect on the prompts and see each others responses, and I hope your placement goes really well.

In pre-recorded synchronous online workshops, 4th year medical students responded on Padlet to reflective prompts:

- challenges to their wellbeing
- protective factors
- sources of support

Anonymous comments
Able to see their peers' responses
Collaborative learning environment
Self-paced

Methodology

Ethics approval: University of Liverpool Institute of Population Health Research Ethics Committee (Reference: 8365).

Participants

Year 4 MBChB students, six workshops between 11/20 & 6/21,

Materials

Lecture recorded in Panopto & available on Canvas. Padlet site.

Procedure

Students informed about the research prior to the workshop. Participants wrote anonymous open-text responses to reflective prompts while watching pre-recorded content.

Analysis

Thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), guided by the study aims & open-coding for additional themes.

Padlet prompts

One word check-in: How do you feel at the moment?

What expectations, hopes, concerns, and fears do you have about this placement?

What are your stress “warning signs”?

What is “resilience”?

When have shown resilience?

What refreshes and restores you?

What drains and depletes you?

How has COVID-19 affected your relationships with peers, patients, and academic staff?

What support do you think would be helpful to you? What makes getting support easier or more difficult?

Resilience plan: What steps will you take during this placement to increase your resilience and mental wellbeing?

Lecture feedback: What worked well? What could be improved?

Examples of responses:

<p>Yoga, running, cycling, spending time with friends</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Exercise, eating well. Going for a walk. Speaking to the family</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Thinking about how much studying I have to do before exams</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Online lectures and seminars seem to drain me more than face-face ones.</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>
<p>Being around my family and friends, Spending time outside the house, Self care</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Speaking to family and friends over the phone or video.</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>deadlines, not enough time in the day</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Waking up early every day long days on placement, continuous lack of sleep, long zoom days</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>
<p>Exercise and sleep</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>being outside especially at the sea, opening up with my friends and my mum, listening to music, watching my comfort tv shows, making a plan/being organised</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>having too much work to do</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Sometimes having to go to placement + travel + study + look after myself is really tough to juggle!</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>
<p>socialising with friends, being productive, eating well, sleep and COFFEE</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>	<p>Constantly feeling like what you are doing is not enough, trying to keep positive during these difficult times, heavy workload</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>Add comment</p>		

Results

During six workshops between November 2020 and June 2021, 78 out of 113 eligible students participated, giving a response rate of 69%.

Themes identified in the responses were:

- **Academic, lifestyle, and relational factors increase stress and diminish mental wellbeing**
- **Lifestyle, relational and attitudinal coping strategies replenish and maintain mental wellbeing**
- **COVID-19 has exacerbated stressors and removed coping strategies**
- **Informal and formal support was valued but restricted by COVID-19**

Academic, lifestyle, and relational factors increase stress and diminish mental wellbeing

- **Academic pressures and factors relating to studying medicine:** exams, revision, deadlines, workload, specific course requirements, timetables, online learning, placement, communication from University, feelings of comparison and competition, feeling unproductive, and overthinking
- **Lifestyle factors:** lack of sleep, early mornings, eating unhealthily, alcohol, scheduling issues such as having too many commitments, financial pressures, and social media
- **Relational factors:** spending too much time with people, feeling socially isolated or being unable to see people, or having negative social experiences



Indicators for high levels of stress

- **Behaviour change:** poor or decreased sleep, increased sleep; overeating, unhealthy food choices, decreased eating; exercising less or more; withdrawing socially; feeling less organised or frantically reorganising; smoking or drinking more alcohol.
- **Cognitive and emotional responses:** irritability, anxiety and overthinking, difficulty with motivation and concentration, and becoming more emotional.
- **Physical signs:** headaches, stomach ache or nausea, breathing difficulties, heart racing or palpitations.

“Headaches”

“Increased comfort eating”

“Become irritable and more emotional”

“Messed-up sleeping pattern”

“Isolating myself from friends”

“Rapid breathing”

“Tight feeling in my chest”

“Getting easily frustrated”

“Irrational thinking, over-thinking”

Lifestyle, relational and attitudinal coping strategies replenish and maintain wellbeing

- **Relational connections:** spending time with family and friends, seeking support from them when needed.
- **Lifestyle habits:** physical activity, walks, time spent outdoors, eating healthily, improving sleep habits.
- **Time-out:** setting time aside for relaxation and enjoyment, entertainment (e.g. TV, films, Netflix, gaming), creativity (e.g. painting, singing, baking)
- **Reflection:** journaling, meditation, mindfulness, prayer, seeking support from peers
- **Time management:** Organisation, being productive and maintaining balance also contributed to wellbeing.
- **Avoiding unhelpful coping strategies,** such as social media, reading the news, and alcohol
- **A change of mindset:** e.g. stop worrying, stay positive, be present, practising acceptance, reframing situations

“Spending quality time with family, friends and pets”

“Accept that I can only try my best”

“Eat healthily and exercise”

“Fresh air and walks”

“Listening to music/singing”

“Take time to myself and not feel guilty for it”

“Reflect on upsetting situations with peers on placement”

“Relaxing and taking time out”

“Speak to family and friends when I need extra support”

“Manage my time and make sure that I have time to myself to recharge”

COVID-19 has exacerbated stressors and removed coping strategies

- **Exacerbating academic stresses:** Online learning was identified as a draining factor (although some students liked not having to travel)
- **Removal of coping strategies:** Approaches students had previously found helpful were unavailable. For example, socialising with family and friends, team sports, and going to the gym
- **Changes to relational connections with peers, patients and staff:** COVID-19 had an overwhelmingly negative impact on relationships with peers, patients and staff
- Not all students reported negative effects on well-being, with one saying it had *“helped [them] become more self-reliant in terms of well-being”*. Some students reported positive effects on relationships with patients

“Initially it improved my mental well-being as I found time to care for myself, but with time I think everyone’s mental well-being decreased as things they used for mental health were no longer available e.g. gym, counselling, seeing friends”.

“Added strain on my housemates to be the only ones to support me”,

“Much more difficult to have relationships with peers and began feeling very isolated”

“Lack of contact with others”

“Masks make it harder to connect with people and build relationships”

“Every day feels the same, it’s hard to find motivation to do anything”.

“Online lectures and seminars seem to drain me more than face-face ones”

Informal and formal support was valued but restricted by COVID-19

- **Informal sources:** family and friends, difficult when aware that others were struggling or when feeling like a burden
- **Formal support:** mostly positive experiences; favoured integrating support with academic systems (e.g. AAs, CCTs, placement supervisor), and personalised communication
- **Barriers to accessing support:** stigma, practicalities, waiting times, concerns about impact on progression/career, in-person/online, COVID-19 made seeking formal or informal support more difficult, e.g. inability to visit family

“I would like more check-ins from the school and placement. We move around so much and now don't go in to uni at all. Might help prevent getting to the stage where we need proper wellbeing support”.

“Reassurance should be provided to medical students that accessing the wellbeing team is not detrimental to their degree. If anything it should be marketed as a professional and responsible thing to do.”

“Actually discussing difficulties with friends has been most helpful, as it can sometimes feel like you're the only one struggling, when actually most people are finding this year really difficult”

“Family are a huge support for me and I miss seeing them and the lack of human contact.”



<p>Massive impact on friendships hard to stay in touch virtually</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>H Add comment</p>	<p>Not being able to see friends or travel back home to see friends/family there</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>H Add comment</p>	<p>With my close friends we have become closer and take the time to communicate with each other. However I have found it hard to maintain other social circles and I feel guilty for this.</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>H Add comment</p>	<p>Masks are an impediment to meaningful connections with new people.</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>H Add comment</p>
<p>feel as though haven't been able to connect with peers and academic staff as much during this time</p> <p>♡ 0</p> <p>H Add comment</p>	<p>It has been really hard to maintain friendships outside of my house, which has put added strain on my housemates to be the only ones to support me.</p> <p>♡ 0</p>	<p>With patients there has been limited contact and I miss speaking to patients.</p>	<p>Strained relationship with housemates, have felt quite isolated. Missing being able to visit my family</p> <p>♡ 0</p>

• Quotes

Getting home late without having done anything super **productive** during the day

♡ 0

👤 Add comment

Unproductive days/feeling like something has been a waste of time

♡ 0

👤 Add comment

placement - usually **unproductive** and feel time could be better spent elsewhere.

♡ 0

Try to stop **feeling guilty** for doing something that isn't medicine

♡ 0

👤 Add comment

Not **feel guilty** for taking time to myself

♡ 0

👤 Add comment

Take time to go to exercise each day, talk it through with my housemates and not **feel guilty** for taking time to myself

♡ 0

There is a culture of **competition** and comparing ourselves to others which is really unhelpful.

♡ 0

👤 Add comment

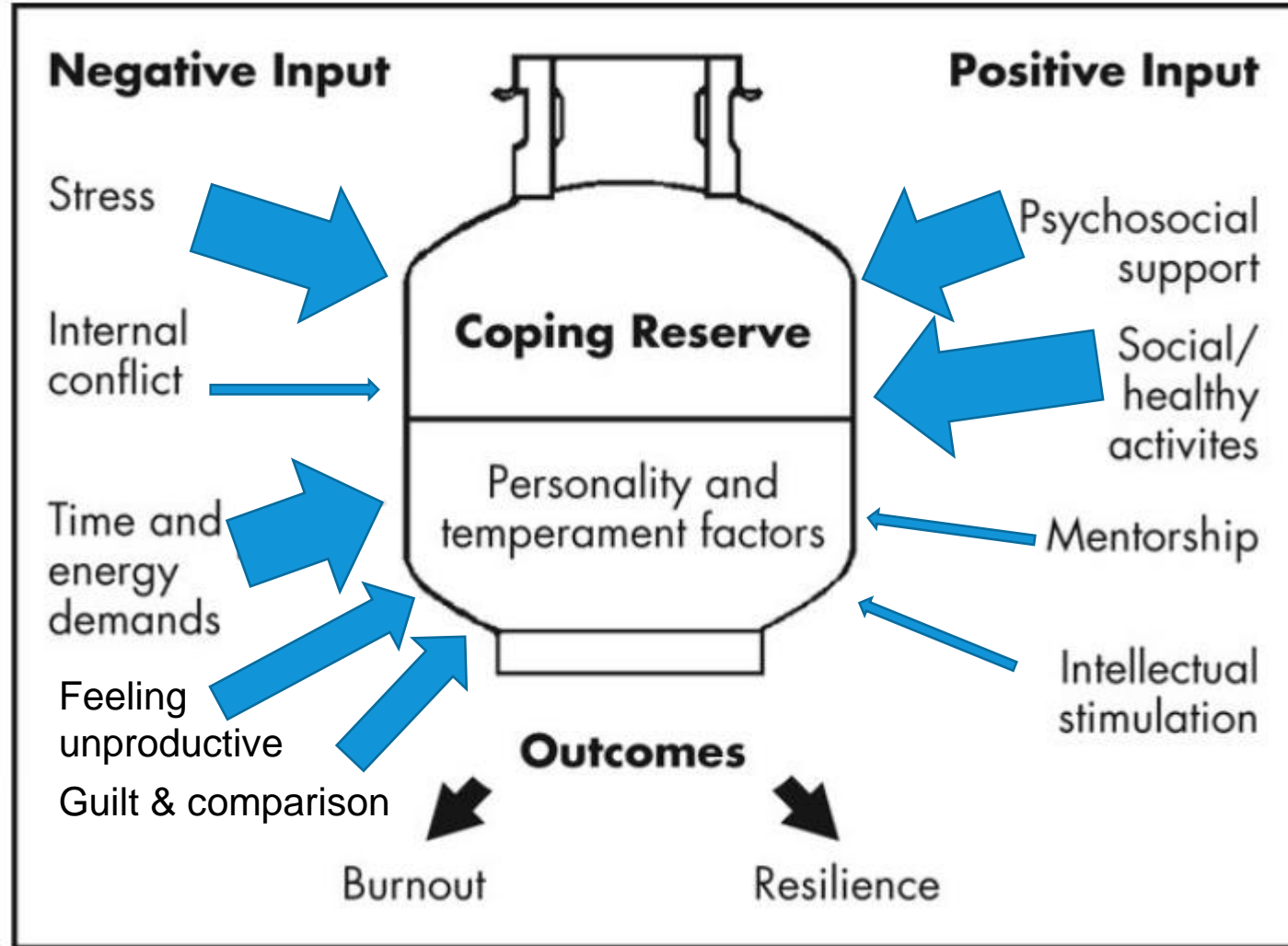
Constant **comparisons** between other medical students.

♡ 0

👤 Add comment

Pressure from others to do well and always feeling that everyone is in **competition** and not helping each other.

♡ 0



Revisions to the “Coping Reservoir Model” of mental wellbeing, based on analysis.

Strengths and limitations: Teaching & Learning

- Pre-recorded lecture plus Padlet
- Anonymity
- Learning Outcomes
- Student feedback...



Feedback

"it was so good to be able to share anonymously as people really opened up and I feel closer to others in the group, despite not knowing who posted what"

"PLEASE can this be done more often. It is so helpful seeing that we are not alone"

"I loved this session as it makes you feel like you're not alone"

"I liked the interactivity as instead of just watching a lecture and not taking much in"

"Having the padlet to remain engaged and accountable for watching the lecture"

"Writing things down and seeing what other people wrote was engaging and less anxiety-provoking than speaking on zoom"

"Reassuring to know that there are others going through similar things as you"

"Padlet has been able to make me properly reflect without feeling nervous"

Strengths and limitations: Research & Scholarship

- Novel method of data collection
- Low burden, high response rate
- Priming responses?
- Anonymity/confidentiality
- Utility



The screenshot shows a Padlet board titled "Y4 Palliative Care: Resilience & wellbeing workshop" by Helen West. The board is organized into several sections:

- Welcome!**: A photo of Dr. Helen West with a text introduction: "Hi everyone, I'm Dr Helen West, a Lecturer in Psychology. I've created this Padlet to give you a place to discuss and reflect on the topics covered in the lecture (available on Panopto). It's also somewhere to share useful resources with each other: I've added mine over here ----->>>>".
- Resources (please add any you've found useful)**: A section for sharing resources.
- Coping with COVID podcast**: A section featuring a "COPING WITH COVID" podcast cover and a list of topics: "Short podcast episodes on topics such as: resilience, feeling terrified".
- Sources of support**: A section for support resources, including a link to the "School of Medicine Wellbeing Support" page: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/medicine-student/support/wellbeing/>.
- 1. One word check-in: How do you feel at the moment?**: A section for a one-word check-in.
- 2. Hopes, expectations, concerns you have in your palliative placements**: A section for sharing hopes, expectations, and concerns.

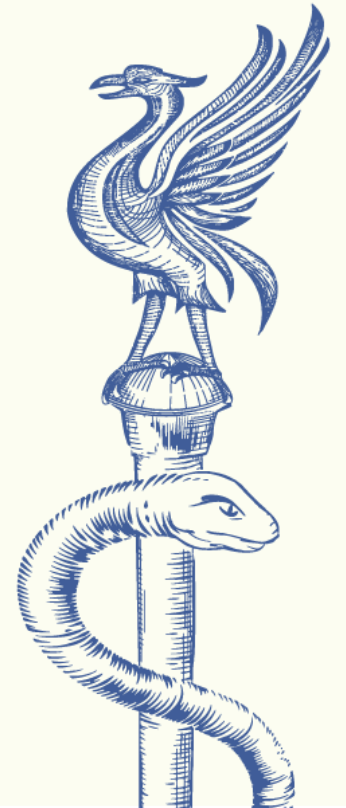
There is also a comment from an anonymous user: "The team is so helpful and supportive!!!!".

Conclusions

- COVID-19 has reduced students' access to some positive aspects of medical education, while intensifying depleting factors.
- Students engaged well with this novel method of data collection.
- Findings reinforce and extend the “Coping Reservoir” model.
- The revised model can inform student wellbeing support.

Thank you to:

Dr Paula Byrne
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Ms Karen Ross
Mr Rowan Davies
Mr Oscar Edgington
Dr Ben Shelley
Dr Luke Flain
And all the participants



Thank you.

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