

Optimising the delivery and impacts of interventions to improve hospital doctors' workplace wellbeing in the NHS: The Care Under Pressure 3 realist evaluation study

Plain Language Summary

What is the problem?

Doctors experience high levels of stress affecting their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing due to the volume of patients needing healthcare services and the fact that there are not enough staff and other resources to provide this care. Patients and doctors are very anxious about patient safety and doctors also feel frustrated at being overworked, undervalued and not listened to. Workplace support for doctors is not always effective and there is little reliable guidance on how to improve it.

What did we do?

We worked with hospitals to understand how to improve their strategies to support doctors' wellbeing. The project had three parts:

1. Develop a **tool to map existing support**.
2. **Interview** doctors and other staff in eight hospitals in England to understand how to improve their wellbeing.
3. Develop **guidance** for all hospitals to help them improve their strategies to support doctors' wellbeing.

What did we find?

Using our **tool to map existing support** promoted clear thinking about how to best improve doctors' wellbeing and reduce effects of workplace stress.

Interviews showed that much of the support provided is not addressing the real problems affecting doctors' wellbeing. For example, problems of overwork and poor IT systems were not addressed by 'solutions' such as gifts of tea bags, yoga, and animal visits.

We distilled our results into **guidance** for hospitals to plan and implement support for doctors more effectively.

We are a team of expert researchers and clinicians with nearly a decade of successful work in this area. An advisory group including patients, policy makers, and doctors helped us to design feasible guidance and communicate our results. As well as reports and publications, we have used cartoons and other innovative approaches to make our work more accessible.

Patients have contributed to this summary.