

# LTFT training for health reasons

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# Learning Aims

- Overview of LTFT training for health reasons
- Understand the role of Occupational health and reasonable adjustments
- Understand the challenges associated with LTFT for health reasons

# “Physician heal thyself”

- Doctors get ill too!
- Doctors are poor at recognising their own health needs
- ¼ of junior doctors are not registered with a GP <sup>1</sup>
- Often a refusal to acknowledge illness, “adapting before accepting” <sup>2</sup>
- High stress profession, long hours, attracts those with “perfectionist” personality traits – used to things running to plan, like being in control.<sup>3</sup>

# Why train LTFT for health reasons?

- Disability or illness makes training full time difficult/impossible
- Working full time is adversely affecting your health
- What kind of health conditions do LTFT trainees have?

# Common things are common...

- **Psychological** – bipolar/steroid related
- **Stress** – work/financial/attacked/bullied/family problems
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Migraine
- Musculoskeletal problems
- IVF
- Malignancy
- Hypertension
- Epilepsy
- Ulcerative colitis
- Viral meningitis
- Diabetes
- MI
- Chronic fatigue

- HUGE range of conditions
  - every trainee's illness is different
  - every trainee's needs are different
- Trainee, trainer and Occupational Health need to work together to find a way forward

# Making the decision

- Difficult
- Used to success – this can feel like you are failing.
- Worried about how others will react
- How will I make it work? Will it work out?
- Talk to someone – educational supervisor, college tutor.
- It's not LTFT training for “ill health” it's LTFT for “**good health**”!
- One of the best decisions I have ever made!

# Applying and the role of Occupational health

- Contact your TPD and Head of School – once they have approved your request to train LTFT application is via HR
- Occupational Health
  - Assess your individual health needs
  - Help you re-establish a good work-life balance
  - Ensure fitness to work
  - Advise your employer on any “reasonable adjustments” that need to be made to your working environment
  - Ongoing follow up every 6 months

# What are reasonable adjustments?

- Any change that can be made to assist disabled people to participate in normal day to day activities<sup>4</sup>
- Your employer has a legal obligation to make adjustments (Equality Act 2010)
- Reasonable adjustments are about making your working life easier
- Think about the aspects of work you find difficult
- What would your ideal day at work look like?
- What can be changed to make every day more like your ideal day?
- Each individual will have different reasonable adjustments

# My reasonable adjustments

- Spend minimal time required to achieve training competencies in environments where wearing lead aprons is required
- Provision of lightweight lead
- Avoid rotation to units with very long commute
- Rota requirements
  - Spread out on call shifts as much as practically possible
  - Limit number of consecutive hours worked – weekend days, Sat, Sun only (not Fri, Sat, Sun)
  - Ensure adequate rest between shifts
  - Do not cluster night shifts together
  - Avoid long day shift just before a weekend (e.g. I would work Mon LD, then the weekend, but would struggle with Thurs LD then Sat, Sun)

# When reasonable adjustments aren't being met...

- Don't be afraid to speak up!
- Tell your educational supervisor and college tutor as soon as possible
- Don't feel guilty about asking for your reasonable adjustments to be followed – they are there to keep you well, this benefits you **and** the department in the long run.
- Remember your employer has a **legal obligation** to you to meet these adjustments.

# Tackling exams

- More planning than usual
- Does stress affect your health condition?
- How can we address and manage a possible deterioration?
  - Reduce your on call commitments?
  - Decrease your % of work?
  - Be placed in a training unit near home?
- Don't forget to let the RCOA know – they can provide reasonable adjustments for examinations too
- If things aren't going well you can withdraw application and resit at a different time.

# In conclusion

- Difficult subject
- LTFT training for health reasons is a positive decision
  - Insight
  - Resilience
  - Allows achievement and success
- Support and understanding from trainers is vital to success

# References

1. Harrison J, Redfern N. Flexible training scheme for doctors who are ill. *BMJ* 2001;322:S2-7296.
2. Gautam M, MacDonald R, Helping Physicians cope with their own chronic illnesses. *Western Journal of Medicine*. 2001: 175(5):336-38.
3. Wessely A, Gerada C. When doctors need treatment: an anthropological approach to why doctors make bad patients. *BMJ Careers*. 2013, 12/11/2013.
4. British Medical Association, <http://www.bma.org.uk/support-at-work/doctors-well-being/reasonable-adjustments>, accessed 20/05/2016.