

Information Update CORONAVIRUS Date 24/03/2020

Insights from a retired GP

As your career progresses, personal stresses and strains on the working environment come and go. I think it is possible to weather these with some general points and with consideration of the aspects specific to each one.

Perspective empathy may be difficult to maintain with strenuously anxious patients. They may be challenging (in terms of emotional energy) but you can understand their position. It helps to continue to support national guidance preventing further confusion/aggravation of anxiety and to promote trust. Cohesion with other team members can be ensured by information sharing especially if one individual serves as the “lead” who will keep up to date with local bulletins and national guidance. Knowing your team’s approach is apposite gives confidence in your message (that may of course change) and helps with any complaints that may ensue. Remember the groups that might be ill and that unexpectedly a young person may suffer. All other illnesses continue to present or have ongoing management requirements and so will need time. Boosted triage arrangements can be very effective and patients can be understanding about your pressures during this sort of situation - especially if contact with the team is based on “how can I help you”, rather than “all I can do is...”. Explore the options for different kinds of patient contact in terms of mode but also by whom. Local networks are useful to share ideas and support that may provide some easing of pressures for you, in getting some resources or procedural management changes (for example reviewing the need for meetings). Look after yourself both in prevention of infection and in maintaining wellbeing; you obviously need to protect yourself from catching COVID-19, or any of the other infections doing the rounds. Being aware of your limits when tired from being busy are as important as ever. Some of us are better than others at this – and members of the team will need downtime or unfortunately time off (e.g. for self-isolation) with understanding. Since everyone will be stretched, the positive effect of recognition and thanks for others’ efforts, especially if a task has been delegated is very sustaining. As with previous epi/pan-demics, there will come a time when pressures ease and hopefully cease. Accepting that it’s going to be difficult, but that the difficulties will end I also always found sustaining. The workplace, having met the challenge, seemed happier and had developed in a way that made future challenges easier to meet. Lastly, when we eventually get home, loved ones can find it difficult to manage our relative silence, or grumpiness! Communication and explaining the pressures can of course help these most important relationships of all.

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