

patients and practices. Our pilot sites have report being pleasantly surprised at the feedback received from patients. This has been overwhelmingly positive, expressing gratitude to the practice for its quality of care; for the first time, a technique is being introduced into general practice which will produce consistent, monthly feedback of the patient experience. Any issues have usually been relatively minor in nature requiring small adjustments to service delivery.

NHS England has produced guidance for general practice.² Every practice will ask the same initial question: how likely are you to recommend our GP practice to friends and family if they needed similar treatment or care? Patients have the opportunity of scoring this question as very likely; likely; no more likely than unlikely; unlikely; very unlikely; or don't know. The results are submitted to NHS England monthly. How the score will be calculated will be based on further guidance from NHS England. A second question, which can be of the practice's choosing, asks for further information and can target specific local issues if required.

FFT has been used in industry for many years; it is only new to the NHS. Hospitals have used the feedback to adjust services reflecting patient commentary. Examples can be found on our website: <http://www.thestrategicprojectsteam.co.uk/>. The information will assist colleagues to implement the Friends and Family Test and use it to improve the patient experience further.

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DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X682693

Young carers

The editorial on child maltreatment in the

September issue of the *BJGP* prompted me to think again about young carers.¹ It talked about the fact that many maltreated and vulnerable children do not have an administratively competent carer and that often parents have health issues such as alcohol misuse or physical or mental health problems that can affect their children. In general practice it is not uncommon for us to see the parents but not see the young people themselves. However, young carers are at risk of social isolation and bullying, under-achievement, absenteeism from school, and physical and mental ill health. Having a holistic approach to family medicine should include supporting the young people in their caring role. We can do this by explaining to parents we are happy to support their children too. We can also signpost them to useful websites like www.youngcarers.net or local groups for young carers that can provide youth worker support, youth clubs and days out depending on the area. Perhaps I can set a challenge to GP's reading this and suggest a way to double their CPD points? Find out what is available in your area to support young carers and next time you see a patient with health issues who has children at home think also about what support their children may need.

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DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X682705

Should we celebrate outstanding achievement in general practice training?

Celebrating achievement aims to boost morale and inspire others. At a time when general practice is under intense pressure, we on the London GP Trainee Committee

thought it was important to do just that and we organised the first London Trainee Excellence awards, based on a model initiated by the Severn Deanery.

In his letter in the October edition of this journal,¹ Dr Spitzer questions whether we can define excellence in general practice, should we celebrate it and if patients would be better off if trainees focused on 'core general practice' and covering the curriculum rather than activities outside the traditional model of the doctor alleviating the suffering of their individual patients.

We too struggled with defining excellence. We did not include clinical proficiency in our criteria as we felt this is reflected in attainment of MRCP and we were seeking to focus on the broader meaning of general practice as it has become, with a population as well as individual focus. Research (as reflected in this journal), teaching, and leadership are all important aspects of professional development, being a GP, and core general practice. Indeed this is reflected in the RCGP curriculum and competencies.

The categories we chose; Research, Learning and Development, Leadership, Medical Work outside the vocational training scheme, and Personal Achievement outside Medicine, allowed trainers and trainees to nominate their colleagues for a range of awards and to showcase the many opportunities available to trainee GPs. The award winners are all hardworking, dedicated doctors, who committed much of their personal time to their projects and I am sure they would be dismayed if they were seen to be neglecting their clinical duties.

Taking part in activities outside direct patient care should not negatively impact on clinical ability. Quite the opposite, it can help with personal and professional development, building the skills to be the adaptable, innovative workforce required to maintain one of the most effective primary care systems in the world.

Celebrating outstanding achievements inspires others and provides positive feedback, improving resilience in these challenging times.

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DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X682717

Research into practice: management of atrial fibrillation in general practice

I enjoyed the review of the management of atrial fibrillation in practice by Fitzmaurice and Hobbs; it concisely covered the salient points on this hugely important topic.¹ However, I would like to highlight one important aspect on the current management of atrial fibrillation and in particular relation to the use of novel oral

anticoagulants. These are often (mis) described as 'not needing monitoring'. However, this should always be qualified with the statement that they 'do not need INR monitoring'. The patient must have their renal functioning infrequently and because of the short half life it is vital that the patient is regularly counselled about the importance of not missing doses.

My concern is that if these two points are missed more patient's might be started on these very new medications without the proper assessment and informed consent.

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DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X682729

Junior doctors and waterpipe tobacco smoking

Rawaf *et al*¹ present data from three small studies that add to the growing body of evidence that waterpipe tobacco smoking is an increasing public health concern in the UK.² Ismail's study corroborates previous work showing that 76% of waterpipe-only users would answer 'no' to the question 'Do you smoke?'.³ This is an important consideration for tobacco monitoring in primary care.

Much UK waterpipe tobacco smoking research has focused on large cities, and none on healthcare professionals themselves. We surveyed 65 junior doctors in Stoke-on-Trent, a small city in the West Midlands, (100% response rate) and a further 100 junior doctors across the West Midlands (21.5% response rate) using