Supporting Underperforming Trainees

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Learning Outcome

• Definition (significance) of underperformance
• Issues of underperformance
• Approach in managing underperformance
• Role of educational Supervisor
• Key Messages
DEFINITION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE
Definition

Underperforming doctor

*who persistently fail to comply with standards of good medical practice*

Good Medical Practice; General Medical Council (GMC)

Trainees in difficulty (10%)

◆ *During first two years of training*

◆ *Transition from student to responsible professionals*
Conflicting Issues

- Trainee in learning curve
- Employee in health organisation
- Stresses
  - Internal
  - External

Doctor

Learning

External stress

Internal stress

Work expectations

PERFORMANCE IMPAIRMENT
Significance

Identification
- Patient Safety

Support
- Risk to trainee

Management
- Systematic approach
ISSUES OF UNDERPERFORMANCE
poor performance is a ‘symptom and not a diagnosis’ and it is essential to explore the underlying cause or causes
• Poor clinical assessment and management
• Poor communication with patients and/or colleagues
• Inadequate/inaccurate documentation
• Failure to follow protocols
• Difficulties in carrying out procedures
• Interpersonal conflict
• Leadership difficulties
• Problems with prioritisation/decision making
• Difficulty dealing with complex scenarios
• Unprofessional behaviour
Possible Causes

- Personal relationships at home or work
- Financial difficulties
- Mental or physical health problems
- Substance abuse
- Loss of confidence
- Stress, frustration
- Marginalisation
Factors affecting Performance

• Attributes of the trainee

• Personal pressures on the trainee

• Attributes in the training and working environment
APPROACH IN MANAGING UNDERPERFORMANCE

STEPS IN MANAGING UNDERPERFORMANCE
“3” PRINCIPLES

EARLY RECOGNITION

INTERVENTION

PREVENTION
Early Recognition

Signs
Concern Raised

- Clinical Performance
- Time Management
- Professional Issues

- Supervisor
- Colleagues
- Trainee(self)
- Patient
Disappearing Act
- Concern expressed
- Absent from work, lateness

Reduced work input
- Slowness, incomplete letters
- Working long hours with unfinished work

Behavioral issues
- Disrespectful to colleagues, patients
- Aggressive response

Resistance
- Inability to compromise
- Rejection of constructive criticism

Bypass syndrome
- Colleagues avoid to ask advice
- Or help

Career Problems
- Difficulty in passing exams
- Disillusionment with specialty
Social Media

• Facebook/Twitter
  ◆ *Source of stress*

• Awareness that trainee is experiencing difficulty
  ◆ *Post information relating to problem*
  ◆ *Concerns from posts*
Preliminary Assessment of Concern

**Is it a PROBLEM?**
- Collect Information
- Assess the actions required

**Gather the facts**
- Right source
- Maintain confidentiality

**Severity of Problem**

**Time of action**
Assess the severity of Problem

**Low level**
- Discussion
- Resolved

**Urgent**
- Patient safety
- Trainee safety
- Criminal misconduct

**Referral**
- External Advice
- Documentation
Intervention
Dealing with problem
Steps to take

**TIMELY ACTION**
- Deviation from the expected performance

**MEETING WITH TRAINEE**
- Provide support to trainee (Discussion/referral)

**AGREE A PLAN WITH TIME FRAME**
- Supervision and mentoring

**DOCUMENTATION**
- Share with trainee

**REVIEW THE PERFORMANCE**
- Targeted or remedial training

**ADVICE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES**
- HR, lead employer, deaery
Meet with trainee

- Early stage
- Fair procedure
- Gather information for assessment
- Giving opportunity to trainee

- Timeliness: deal without delay
- To present their view
- To identify any source of bias
- Keep the record of meeting
## Identify the problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Performance</td>
<td>• Poor knowledge, time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Difficulty in making clinical decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour problems</td>
<td>• Professional misconduct</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication problem</td>
<td>• Clinical or written communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Problems</td>
<td>• Mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drug abuse/dependance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>• Family issues</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Managing concern

Patient Safety

Supervision / support

Prevention

Suicide is a real problem early intervention and referral
Majority, day to day basis, record the action taken

Investigate, collect facts

Advice from HR, Deanery

A robust and detailed DIAGNOSIS can lead to effective remediation
Develop and Implement Action Plan

- Re-establish appropriate levels of performance
- Providing a plan after mutual agreement with trainee
- Documented action plan
  - Expected outcome
  - Review date
  - Copy to trainee
SMART Outcome

- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- ACHIEVABLE
- RELEVANT
- TIME FRAME
Referral

• GP/Psychiatrist
• Psychologist
• Confidential counselling
External Support

- Medical Administration
- Director of medical education
- Human resources
  - Attendance
  - Disciplinary matters
- Deanery
- Lead Employer
- GP

- Majority are resolved by working with trainees
- 3-5% needs referral or further intervention
Review of Action Plan

- At regular intervals
- Progress of intended outcomes
- May need amendments or extension
- If failure to achieve outcome, may need referral
Concern
- Assess the severity
- Patient/Trainee safety? Misconduct?

Assessment
- Underlying Issues
- Investigate

Communication
- Speak to trainee
- Support: HR/deanery

Action Plan
- Agreement with trainee
- Set a review date

Implementation
- Support to trainee
- Review

Conclusion
- Matter resolved
- Further review or referral
ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISOR
Prevention

Regular feedback to trainee

- Identifying trainee with difficulty
- Implementation of effective support system

Effective communication

- Attitude problems
- Behavioral issues

Dealing performance matter effectively

- Timely
- Fair and objectively
Support

• Assistance to trainees will make them competent clinicians
• Communication
• Interventions
• Monitoring

Satisfying Outcome for trainee and supervisor
Documentation

- Effective management requires documentation from the earliest stages
- Problem is addressed at an early stage
- Categorise CONCERN as
  - Low level
  - Medium
  - High

Remember: accurate & contemporaneous documentation must be kept
• Do not try to deal with complex scenarios on your own!
• Engage local and regional resources
• Objective assessment of the circumstances
• Involve an experienced colleague early to assist in identifying and exploring underlying factors

Early recognition and appropriate intervention, coupled with effective feedback and appropriate support for trainee
KEY MESSAGES
- Supportive approach
- *Intervention and monitoring*
- Discuss with others
- *Do not jump to conclusion*
- *To get facts right*
- Immediate action
- Risk to patient safety
- Allegations of criminal conduct
- Further assistance
- Identify local resources
- Health issues
- Seek advice from GP

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**Trigger**

**Investigate**

**Performance OR Organisational Issue**

**Appropriate Intervention**