
#LetsRemoveIt anti-bullying campaign

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) has just marked the first year of its #LetsRemoveIt anti-bullying campaign.

Bullying, undermining and harassment are common features of NHS life and have a direct impact on patient care. The 2017 NHS staff survey reported that around a quarter of all NHS staff in England experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from staff in the last 12 months, equating to over a quarter of a million people.

Further, reports estimate that disruptive behaviour in the perioperative area is responsible for 67% of adverse events, 71% of medical errors, and 27% of perioperative deaths (1). Indeed, the Kirkup, Francis and Kennedy reports all pointed to bullying as significant factors in these cases.

Whilst the extent of bullying and undermining throughout the healthcare professions is well documented, surgery is reported as being a specialty where it is particularly prevalent. In the College's own membership survey, nearly 40% of respondents reported they had been victims of such behaviour, with a similar number witnessing the behaviour.

RCSEd is keen to ensure that the #LetsRemoveIt campaign is more than just a hashtag and inspires real cultural change. As well as developing a clear evidence base regarding the impact bullying has on patient outcomes, the College has also undertaken a broad programme of activities. This includes developing resources which are available for all to access at <https://www.rcsed.ac.uk/bullying-and-undermining-campaign>. The #LetsRemoveIt e-learning module is CPD accredited and aims to give individuals more confidence in identifying and managing incidents in bullying and undermining.

#LetsRemoveIt events have been held around the UK and are being planned throughout 2018 which provide healthcare leaders with the opportunity to learn, share and discuss solutions to counter bullying and undermining behaviour and influence positive culture change. RCSEd also recognises that as an issue endemic within the NHS, working with organisations across the NHS is essential to effect real change. As well as working closely with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, RCSEd is also working in close partnership with the GMC and BMA in order to develop and disseminate resources to the wider healthcare workforce.

RCSEd is also working with individual health boards and NHS Trusts who have identified possible issues with bullying and undermining and is offering direct support to senior NHS leaders to address the issues they face. We encourage senior leaders who would like further support to get in touch with the College for further support and direction.

If you would like further information on RCSEd's #LetsRemoveIt campaign please contact birmingham@rcsed.ac.uk.

References:

- (1) Rosenstein, A.H. & O'Daniel, M. (2008) 'A survey on the impact of disruptive behaviours and communication defects on patient safety', The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety 34(8), cited in 'Workplace bullying and harassment of doctors; A review of recent research', British Medical Association, 2017

Wales Academy Executive comment :

Doctors at all stages of their career may experience bullying and many don't recognise it or if they do, are not prepared to admit they have experienced it. Bullying is undermining, can impair performance and may cause mental health problems. It is unacceptable. The RCSEd campaign is a worthy cause which the AMRCW supports. If you experience bullying, don't tolerate it; report it to a senior colleague or to a peer you trust.