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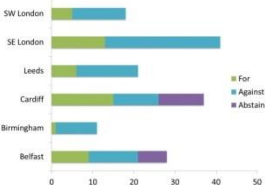
Introduction

Recruitment of UK medical students to psychiatry training is acknowledged to be 'in crisis'.¹ Docbate is a simultaneous medical debate created by junior psychiatry doctors to promote discussion and debate and to challenge attitudinal barriers to recruitment into psychiatry. The inaugural event took place on 28 April 2015 in locations across the UK. Teams of medical students and doctors debated the motion '*cash, care and coercion – this house believes that doctors do know best*', followed by expert panel discussions and audience participation. Panellists included leading academics, service users, advocates, legal experts and journalists.



the debates

163 people attended with votes taken before and after the debates. Birmingham, Cardiff and SW London all voted for the motion before the debate, but Cardiff was the only venue to still vote for the motion after the debate.



audience inbox

- “listening to the debate was both entertaining and informative”
- “very enlightening”
- “loved the internet link up”
- “an interesting panel with a diverse array of arguments”
- “gives students the chance to talk about their opinions... with experienced healthcare professionals”
- “debate motion was too wide a subject”

Recruitment – under budget

£3,707 budget for 5 events
£2,760 actual spend for 6 events

docbate : online

2,382

unique visitors to www.docbate.com

7,935 page views

(640 on 28.04)

520

tweets re. Docbate (26.04.15-26.05.15)

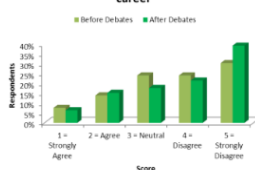


30% of audience heard about Docbate through online media

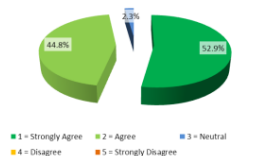
Methodology

Debates took place in medical schools and students in the audiences were invited to complete questionnaires at the start and end of the event to explore their attitudes to psychiatry. These used selected questions from the ATP-30 (Attitudes Towards Psychiatry 30) instrument and added questions about interest in a career in psychiatry.² Most questions asked for agreement on a five point Likert scale (strongly agree / agree / neutral / disagree / strongly disagree). Results were analysed using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests to look for differences in attitudes before and after the debates.

I am not interested in psychiatry as a career



I enjoyed attending Docbate



Results

93 questionnaires were completed across the debates with 65 respondents describing themselves as medical or biomedical students and two as FY doctors. 97.6% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed before the debates that psychiatry is interesting, with no significant change after. 71.4% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that psychiatry lacks an evidence base, with 25.0% neutral. 97.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that psychiatry is a part of medicine, with no respondents disagreeing with this statement. 96.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mental health problems are relevant to all medical specialties. With each of these questions, there was no significant change in the responses before or after the debates.

Prior to the debate, 30.4% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that they were not interested in a career in psychiatry, but after the debate this had increased to 39.2%. Although there appeared to be a shift towards an increased interest in a career in psychiatry, this did not reach significance. When only younger respondents (≤ 24 years) were included the trend was more noticeable, but still with a p value of 0.09. 83.3% of respondents were interested in knowing more about a career in psychiatry after the debates, although this had not changed significantly from before.

Discussion

Docbate reached a large number of individuals, particularly online, with subsequent coverage published by the British Medical Association. Operationally, events successfully ran on time and under budget while establishing strong links with key stakeholder groups.

The absence of attitudinal change is explained by the extremely high starting point of attendee attitude, leaving little opportunity for improvement. In short, we were 'preaching to the converted'.

Conclusions

Future Docbate events will focus more on attracting students not already engaged with psychiatry. Trainee committee representatives belonging to other Royal Colleges have already expressed an interest collaborating on future debates. This will enable Docbate to reach a different cohort of students as well as sharing operational workload and costs, and further bridging the gap between medical specialties. When repeating the event, we shall re-measure performance metrics and review our strategy once again.

Declaration: Docbate received funding from the RCPsych, NCMH, the MDU and Wesleyan.



Panellists Professor Sir Simon Wessely, Professor Raanan Gillon and Sarah Wheeler in SE London



Docbate Cardiff

References

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- Burra P, Kalin R, Leichner P, Waldron JJ, Handforth JR, Jarrett FJ, Amara IB. The ATP-30 – a scale for measuring medical students' attitudes to psychiatry. *Medical education*. 1982, 16: 31-38.