

The NHS Practitioners Health Programme (PHP): 8-year outcomes of doctors treated for substance use and addiction disorders

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Background and Aims

Who are the most challenging patients of them all? A widely undisputed answer is, in fact, Doctors themselves. This is especially true for substance use and addiction disorders, where doctors have notoriously poor outcomes in terms of abstinence, employment and mortality. The UK NHS Practitioner Health Programme (PHP) was commissioned in 2008 in order to break down the barriers facing addicted doctors in the UK. Here, we analyse 8-years of data from the UK NHS PHP.

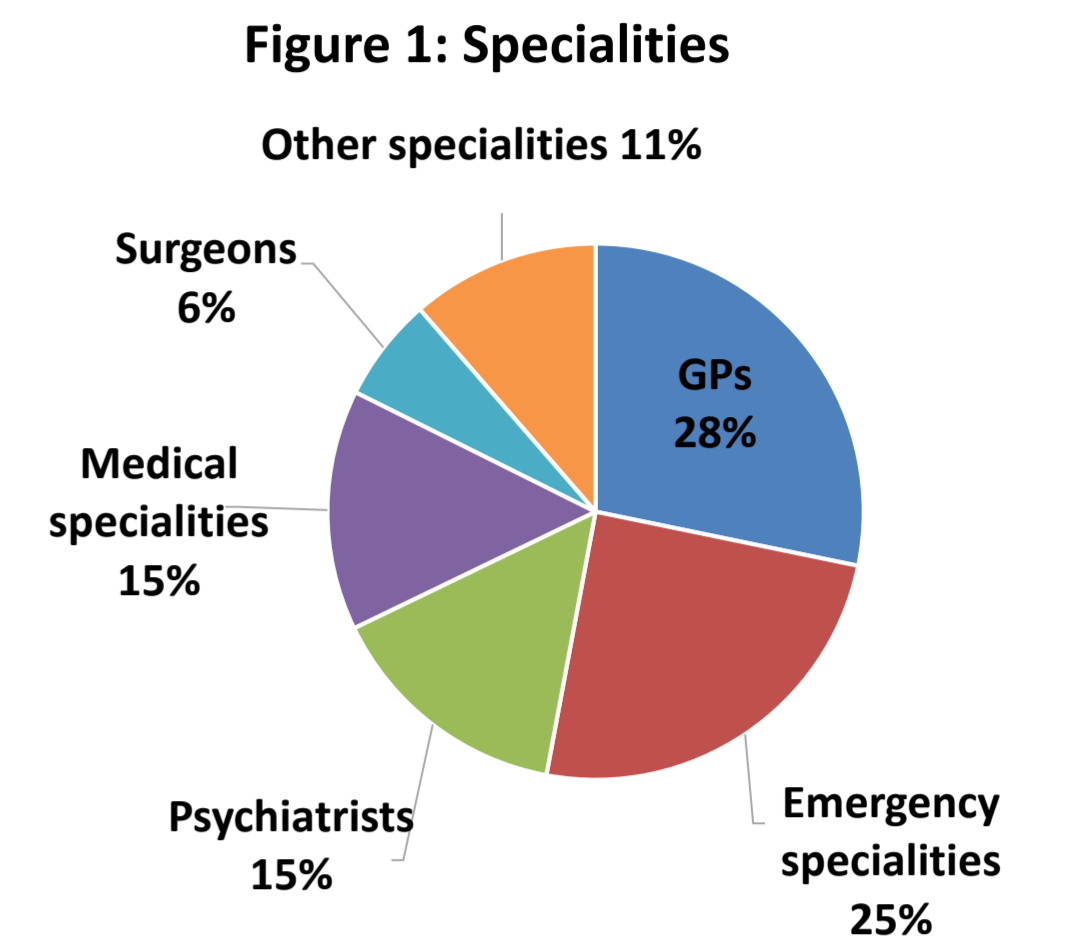
Methods

Retrospective, longitudinal, notes-based cohort study of data over 8-years (Nov 2008-Mar 2016).

Results

255 eligible records met the inclusion criteria; 27.1% (n=69) female and 72.9% (n=186) male. Nearly three-quarters of the cohort had alcohol dependence (71.8%; n=183). The majority of practitioner-patients (65.9%; n=168) were managed in the community.

Over two-thirds of the cohort consisted of:
 • General practitioners (28.2%; n=72)
 • Emergency specialities (anaesthetics, A&E, acute medicine) (24.7%; n=63)
 • Psychiatrists (14.9%; n=38) (Figure 1)



ANNUAL LEAVE 48.6% advised to disclose to GMC at START	O&G	77.6% abstinent at END	O&G	FREE HELP 7.8% using problematically at the END	O&G	SUPER TAX 11.3% suspended at the START	ITU	SUPER TAX 3.1% suspended at the END	ITU	REFERRED TO THE GMC			
51.4% involved in disciplinary at START	GP	COMMUNITY CHEST • PHP medical review • PHP financial support • Support groups for doctors or residential • Detoxification (community or residential)						3.1% 1ary and 2.4% 2ndary behavioural addictions	PSYCH				
SUPPORT FROM PHP	GP							65.9% treated in community alone	GP	34.1% admitted for residential detox/rehab	GP	SUPPORT FROM YOUR GP	PSYCH
NEW JOB	GP							Club drugs, NPS 5.9%	PAEDS	Opiates 10.2%, stimulants 4.3%	PAEDS	Behavioural addictions 100% response rate	PSYCH
NEW JOB	GP							Income Tax	PAEDS	71.8% alcohol dependence	PAEDS	NEW JOB	NEW JOB
MONOPOLY FOR DOCTORS: 8 years of the NHS Practitioners Health Programme (PHP)													
EXCLUSION CRITERIA: Did not undergo assessment or Not a doctor e.g. allied health professionals (dentists, pharmacists) or No primary addiction problem (e.g. primary depressive episode with high alcohol intake).													
OUTCOMES • Completed Rx and discharged (68.2%) • Abstinent at END (77.6%) • 82.4% employed at END (42.4% start)													
JUST VISITING 8 years of follow up	SURGERY	14.9% were psychiatrists	SURGERY	FREE HELP 24.7% were from emergency specialities	SURGERY	NEW JOB 28.2% were GPs	MEDICINE	MEDICINE Range 25-66 years	SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS	MEDICINE N=255 27.1% F, 72.9% M			
NEW YEAR OF TRAINING	82.4% working at the END 10 deaths (3.9%); 2 by suicide												

Results (continued)

Over 8 years of follow up:
 • 68.2% completed treatment and discharged (2.2y mean length of treatment)
 • 77.6% (n=198) were abstinent at the end of treatment
 • 82.4% (n=210) were in employment at the end of treatment (42.4% (n=108) at the start)
 • 2.6% (n=7) were unemployed at the end of treatment (14.1% (n=36) at the start)
 • 2.4% (n=6) were on sick leave at the end of treatment (25.9% (n=66) at the start)
 • 3.9% (n=10) had died

References:

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Conclusions

Over 8 years of follow-up, The UK NHS PHP has proven to be an efficacious intervention for the treatment and support of addicted doctors.

Doctors with addiction or substance misuse problems can be safely treated and returned to the workforce in the majority of cases.