

Raising Concerns at Medical School; a student-led research and innovation initiative

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Introduction

- The General Medical Council states that doctors and medical students have responsibility to raise concerns (RC), and have issued guidance specifically relating to RC within medical education¹
- Following the experience of one of the authors in RC as a medical student, we investigated the opinions and experience of medical students in RC.
- The data gathered was used to adapt the RC undergraduate curriculum at UCL Medical School, London

Aims

- 1) To research the opinions of medical students to better understand the culture of RC
- 2) To evolve the RC curriculum to improve its relevance to medical students

Methods

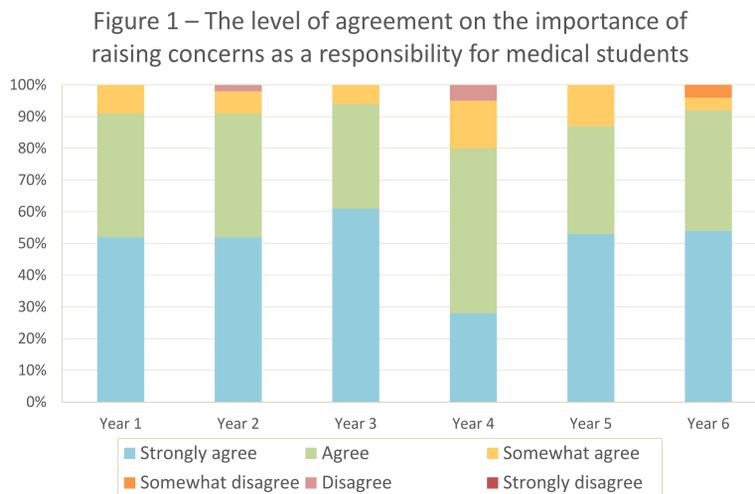
After acquiring a UCL grant and UCL ethics approval for a student-led project, the opinions of medical students on RC were researched using mixed methods.

A voluntary survey was distributed to all UCL medical students gathering quantitative data on attitudes and experiences of RC.

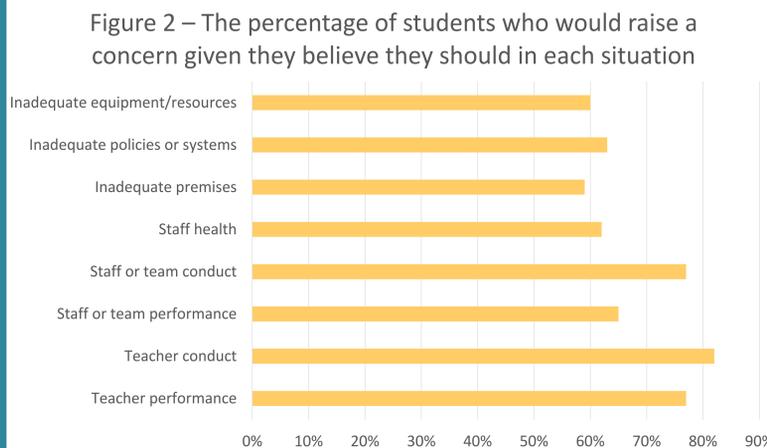


Four focus groups were run on RC which were thematically analysed .

Results



“ If that’s what things are like in the NHS, then why should we complain about it? ”
- Quote from clinical student focus group



Thematically analysing the focus groups, showed three emerging themes relating to barriers to RC:

- **Comprehension** – understanding when it is appropriate to raise a concern and the mechanisms to do so
- **Conviction** – understanding why it is important to raise a concern and the potential implications of doing this
- **Courage** – recognising students have a moral responsibility to raise concerns and having the resilience to manage oneself

Conclusion

As a consequence of this work, the RC curriculum has been reshaped and evolved to address the barriers students face to raise concerns.

- **Year One:** A tutor-facilitated small group session on why RC is important, with discussion around culture and consequences (*conviction*)
- **Year Four:** Revision of material in the fourth year curriculum looking at when to raise concerns in the clinical environment (*comprehension*)
- **Year Five:** A large group reflective practice Schwartz Round² on the subject of courage and RC (*courage*)

This work will help to address previously missing essential ingredients from the RC curriculum.

Discussion

The impact of implemented changes will be monitored.

We believe that RC should be part of medical schools’ formal curricula, addressing components of comprehension, conviction and courage.

Work is required to develop innovative ways of empowering students to raise concerns.

UCLMS is planning to elect a Speaking Up Champion.

References

- (1) Raising concerns in medical education and training <http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/9633.asp>
- (2) <https://www.pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/our-work/schwartz-rounds/>

