

Dear colleagues,

We would like to draw your attention to the recent expansion of the Health for Health Professionals Wales (HHP Wales) service following the recent Welsh Government announcement.

We would like to take this opportunity to ask that you consider sign-posting appropriate patients (NHS healthcare professionals and healthcare students) to the service.

We would also like to particularly highlight a significant change relating to the service process. Where appropriate HHP Wales Doctor Advisors may ask the individual they have been assessing to contact their GP directly, rather than just accessing HHP Wales support services. HHP Wales Dr Advisors will only suggest such an action when they have significant concerns about the individual.

To attempt to make the process as seamless as possible we will ask the individuals to contact their GP and state that they have been assessed by HHP Wales and have been recommended to see a GP. We write to ask that these self-referrals be treated as important and be given urgent and appropriate attention.

In extremis, HHP Wales Doctor Advisors may also contact mental health crisis teams directly. If this were to happen then they will also ensure that you as the GP is made aware of the circumstances.

The following information relates to the HHP Wales service expansion and is included for information:

HHP Wales Background

HHP Wales has been commissioned since August 2012 to provide face to face counselling for any doctor in Wales with mental distress.

It is led by Professor Debbie Cohen OBE who is an international authority on physician health and undertakes research as well as developing and leading HHP Wales since its inception and up until September 2019 led Medic Support for medical students and postgraduate students in School of Medicine, Cardiff University.

Previously, any doctor working in Wales could access up to 8 sessions of CBT free. The feedback and impact of this service has been extremely positive in terms of doctors feeling supported and their clinical condition improving.

Therapists provide feedback once doctors have completed all their HHP Wales sessions. Therapists report on doctors scores for two tools which measure generalised anxiety disorder (GAD-7) and depression (PHQ-9). For doctors referred since 2012, therapists have reported on outcomes of 315 doctors. Of these 315 doctors, 36% had severe levels of anxiety as measured by GAD at initial assessment dropping to only 4% reporting severe levels of anxiety at final assessment. Only 10% had subclinical levels of anxiety at initial assessment rising to 58% having subclinical levels at final session.

In relation to depression, 31% had moderately severe or severe levels of depression as measured by PHQ-9 at initial assessment dropping to only 6% reporting moderately severe or severe levels of depression at final assessment. 13% had subclinical levels of depression at initial assessment rising to 61% having subclinical levels at final session.

Given the current international crisis, HHP Wales has been asked to extend this service and enhance it to provide support for all frontline NHS staff in Wales.

Aim

To provide a comprehensive tiered model of support for any NHS Wales healthcare practitioner (doctor, nurse, dentist, paramedic, therapist other healthcare professional, medical student and other healthcare students) working in Wales during and post the Covid 19 pandemic.

Model

It is envisaged that the need for such a service will grow over the coming year. It will need to provide support for those with acute symptoms such as those feeling overwhelmed, distressed and developing symptoms of anxiety, depression and longer term effects such as PTSD.

Method

The service works 9 – 5pm weekdays with out of hours support being offered by NHS England and Samaritan services for non-medics and the BMA for medics and medical students

Help line

The service will be run through Cardiff University and individuals can either email or ring the helpline for advice – see <https://www.hhpwales.co.uk/>

Triage

Individuals will be directed to a trained doctor advisor who will triage their need. If there is any uncertainty as to the appropriate pathway, or concern about their mental health a HHP Wales psychiatrist managed by Professor Jon Bisson and provided through the National Centre for Mental health and Cardiff University will provide support.

Services on offer

- Self help
This will be through HEIW and NHS Practitioner Health in England who we are collaborating with. Numerous apps and self-help guides are provided as well as virtual groups. Individuals from any part of the UK can join.
- Peer Support
This will give access to volunteer Peer-support providers. Doctors and medical students will be directed to the services run by the BMA. Other Health Professionals will be directed to a HHP Wales Peer support service.
- Guided Self-Help
Following an initial assessment by an accredited BABCP therapist, individuals will be directed to specific Self-help materials. A follow-up consultation will review the need for additional support.
- Virtual face to face consultations
This will be provided through HHP Wales. Any individual can receive up to 8 sessions of CBT free.
- Access to the NHS Wales PTSD service
This will be accessed by consultation and managed by Prof Jon Bisson who leads on this service.
- Second opinion from Psychiatrist
Senior psychiatrists in Wales through the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) will provide a service to offer a second opinion to the HHP Wales Doctor Advisors on difficult or concerning cases.

Governance

The senior team within HHP Wales will provide all governance structures and are expanding those structures already in place to support the enhanced capabilities of the service. Training will be provided by NCMH psychiatrists and the senior HHP Wales team. Audit of cases and outcomes will continue to be recorded and

expanded to the new services on offer. However, it must be recognised that this service is confidential and only certain data will be recorded.

Recruitment of peer support, psychiatrists and doctor advisors

Doctor advisors, psychiatrists and peer support workers will need to be recruited to support the service. Initially we hope to recruit retired doctors and other healthcare staff who would like to support the NHS during the pandemic but who cannot, or do not want to return to the frontline for personal or health concerns. It will also include senior academics who at present are working full time in an academic role but would like to provide additional support.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to visit our website or contact us for further information.

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