

# Psychological morbidity and job satisfaction amongst medical interns at a Nigerian teaching hospital

Medical internship (houseman ship) is regarded as both educational as well as formative insofar as attitude to work, job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues, and future career directions are consolidated.<sup>1</sup> Equally important is the fact that this is also believed to be the most stressful period of medical practice.<sup>2</sup>

It has been reported that medical interns have lower overall job satisfaction, less job autonomy, with 19% being considered as probably having psychological morbidity.<sup>3</sup> Job satisfaction is an important determinant of physician retention and turnover, and may also affect performance.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this study was to investigate the level of psychological morbidity and job satisfaction among medical interns at a Nigerian teaching hospital.

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among medical interns at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Ilorin in November 2005. All medical interns who had completed at least a rotation out of the 4 rotations they were expected to undertake were included in the study.

The questionnaire comprised of 3 parts. The first part was a questionnaire to elicit socio-demographic and work related characteristics of the doctors. Psychological morbidity was measured using a standard instrument, the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ 12). The GHQ is a self-administered screening instrument designed to measure psychological distress.<sup>5</sup> It can be scored 0-12 and a score of 3 or more is suggestive of a probable case of psychological disorder. It has previously been used in this environment.<sup>6</sup>

Job satisfaction was measured using the 10-item Warr-Cook-Wall job satisfaction scale.<sup>7</sup> The scale provides a short, reliable, valid and easy to use measure of job satisfaction. It has a seven point likert type rating scale for each item tested, and assesses the degree of job satisfaction ranging from "extreme dissatisfaction" (score=1) to "extreme satisfaction" (score=7). The items used include amount of responsibility, freedom to choose own method of working, amount of varieties in your job, colleagues and your fellow workers, physical working conditions, opportunity to use your ability, your rate of pay, recognition you get for your good work, your hours of work, and overall job satisfaction. Data were analysed with SPSS version 11.0.

Thirty-eight out of the fifty medical interns meeting the inclusion criteria at the time of the study, completed and

returned questionnaires, giving a response rate of 76%. The mean age ( $\pm$ SD) of the doctors was  $26.3 \pm 1.8$  years. The majority (92.1%) were within the age range of 25-30 years. Thirty-six (94.7%) were single, more than three quarters (76.3%) felt their remuneration was not commensurate with the service rendered, and 60.5% felt their work load was burdensome. Twelve (31.6%) had a GHQ scored of 3 or more, suggesting probable psychological morbidity.

Table I shows the mean and the standard deviation scores of the doctors on each aspect of job satisfaction assessed. Higher levels of satisfaction were reported for relationship with fellow workers, amount of variety in the job and opportunity to use ability. Lower levels of satisfaction were reported for physical working conditions, hours of work, and rate of pay.

There was no correlation between GHQ score and gender, assessment of remuneration or perception of work load.

It is important to note that 31.6% of these doctors probably had psychological morbidity. This is more than the 25% and 19% reported for consultants and medical interns respectively, but less than 45% reported for general practitioners in United Kingdom.<sup>3,8</sup> The level of psychological morbidity recorded in this study appears to be rather on the high side and though the immediate reason for this is not known, it may be because the

**Table I: Job satisfaction in order of importance**

Dimension*	mean	SD
Your fellow workers	5.13	1.26
Amount of variety in your job	4.68	1.44
Opportunity to use your ability	4.61	1.60
Overall job satisfaction	4.47	1.35
Amount of responsibility you given	4.05	1.66
Recognition you get for your good work	4.05	1.66
Freedom to choose your own method of working	3.37	1.44
Your rate of pay	2.92	1.68
Your hours of work	2.71	1.37
Physical working conditions	2.42	1.46

\*Each dimension scored 1-7; the higher the score the higher the satisfaction.

environment under which these medical interns practice is more stressful. Comparison with medical interns from different health institutions in the country, as well as consultants and general practitioners, would provide further context for the results.

On the job satisfaction scale, working with colleagues and fellow workers, the amount of variety in their job and opportunity to use their abilities were rated high by the medical interns. On the other hand, physical working conditions, hours of work and rate of pay were rated low. On the basis of factor analysis, four dimensions of job satisfaction have been suggested to assess the "intrinsic" aspects of job satisfaction (freedom, responsibility, variety, ability).<sup>7</sup> Two of these (variety and ability) were among the 3 aspects rated high in this study. Also, the lowest levels of job satisfaction derived from "extrinsic" job factors mentioned by Warr et al<sup>7</sup> (hours of work and rate of pay), were also among the 3 aspects rated low by the respondents in this study.

Our findings on the aspects that give medical interns greatest satisfaction and dissatisfaction, are similar to the report of Lambert et al.<sup>1</sup>

This preliminary study gives some indication of psychological functioning in this group of medical interns as well as issues that should be reviewed and addressed regarding job satisfaction. Clearly the data is limited but will hopefully serve as a basis for further and more comprehensive study.

**PO Ajiboye, Ad Yussuf**

Department Of Behavioural Sciences, University Of Ilorin  
Teaching Hospital, Ilorin, Kwara- State, Nigeria  
email: Poboye203@Yahoo.Com

### References

1. Lambert TW, Goldacre M J and Evans J. Views of junior doctors about their work: survey of qualifiers of 1993 and 1996 from United Kingdom medical schools. *Medical Education* 2000; 34: 348-354.
2. Firth- Cozens J. Emotional distress in junior house officers. *Br Med J* 1987; 295: 533-536.
3. Kapur N, Borrill C and Sride C. Psychological distress and job satisfaction in hospital consultants and junior house officers: cross sectional multi centre study. *Br Med J* 1998; 317:511- 512.
4. Linchenstein RL. The job satisfaction and retention of physicians in organised settings: a literature review. *Med Care* 1998; 41: 138-179.
5. Golberg DP. *The detection of psychiatric illness by questionnaire.* London Oxford University press, 1972.
6. Abiodun OA. A validity study of the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale in General Hospital units and a community sample in Nigeria. *Br J Psy* 1994; 165: 669- 672.
7. Warr P, Cook J and Wall T. Scales for the measurement of some work attitudes and aspects of psychological well-being. *Journal of Occupational Psychology* 1979; 52: 129-148.
8. Kapur N, Appleton K and Neal RD. Sources of job satisfaction and psychological distress in GPs and medical house officers. *Fam Pract.* 1999; 16: 600-601.

## Christopher Paul Szabo EATING DISORDERS



The Access Series



### About the Book

Eating disorders (Anorexia Nervosa/Bulimia Nervosa) predominantly affects young females and are amongst the most lethal and disabling of all psychiatric conditions. Whilst stereotypically affecting white females, these conditions have started to emerge amongst black females in South Africa. The current book on eating disorders will provide content related to issues such as diagnosis and treatment as well as looking at the relevance for such information in the South African context.

### About the Author

Christopher P. Szabo is Professor & Chair and Head of Clinical Psychiatry in the Division of Psychiatry, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. He has extensive experience in the diagnosis and management of eating disorders, having been the consultant in charge of the eating disorders unit at Tara Hospital for many years. He has published widely on the subject as well as being extensively involved in public education through media and lectures.

### About the Artist

Deborah Glasco is an Associate Professor in the Department of Molecular Medicine and Haematology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. She believes that her creative energy is synergized by the dichotomy of her work both as a doctor/researcher and artist. She has received informal training in drawing and painting at the Johannesburg Art Foundation and more recently, has studied etching and print-making under the tutelage of master print-maker, Collin Cole (Blue Door Studio, Johannesburg).

### About the Access Series

This series is dedicated to promoting health through knowledge. It aims to facilitate Access, enabling local researchers/ clinicians to publish, in book form, their recent research in Clinical Medicine emanating from completed PhD's as well as make this knowledge more accessible to a wider audience. It is envisaged that all proceeds from the sale of these books and the artworks will be donated to sustain publication of further books in the Access Series.

