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Poster presentation

THE ROLE OF EXAMINATION RANKINGS IN MEDICAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON

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PURPOSE

First coined by Clance and Imes in 1978, the term ‘impostor phenomenon’ is “used to designate an internal experience of intellectual phonies”. People who experience this have deep thoughts of fraudulence regarding their professional or intellectual activities. This perception of illegitimacy leads sufferers to attribute their success to error, preventing high achievers from recognising their successes and inhibiting development in self-esteem.

METHODS

This research aimed to better understand the relationship between medical students and the impostor phenomenon, in the context of examination rankings. An ethics-approved action research project was undertaken at The University of Sheffield, using a pragmatic approach to integrate quantitative and qualitative data via a questionnaire, focus groups and interviews. The key quantitative measure used a validated instrument, the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), which uses twenty items to give scores between 20-100.

RESULTS

Altogether, 191 questionnaire responses were recorded, with 19 students attending a focus group or interview. The cohort's mean CIPS score was 65.81 ± 13.72 , signifying that the average student had “frequent” impostor experiences. Notably, females scored 9.15 points higher than males on average ($p < 0.0001$). Examination rankings were very frequently cited as a major contributing factor to students' impostor feelings and linear regression revealed an increase of 1.12 CIPS points per decile that a student dropped down the examination rankings ($p < 0.05$). Further, ranking in the bottom 10% of the cohort led to a 6.08-point increase on average ($p < 0.05$). Students' quotes underscore the data presented and offer an authentic insight into their experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on this research, four specific recommendations for practice were formulated which are intended to provide medical schools with opportunities for pedagogical evolution and innovation. When implemented, these recommendations will improve the educational experiences for medical students who experience the impostor phenomenon, specifically with a view to mitigating the impact of examination rankings on these experiences.