

# Why tackling burnout is important: a student perspective

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Sir,

We read with great interest the article ‘Tackling burnout: why is it important?’ by James Thorpe (<https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2019.0349>). We are final year medical students at King’s College London and feel that this article highlights a significant issue that can affect patient care. It discusses the potential causes, effects and solutions, but does not address medical school as a cause, which we believe is extremely important.

From our personal experience and current literature, the high workload, difficult curriculum and competitive environment can result in detrimental thinking patterns, emotional distress, anxiety and depression. Students then enter a challenging career without the appropriate resources to cope, which could affect patient safety (IsHak et al, 2013; Hopkins et al, 2019).

The solutions in the article focus on mitigating the risk once individuals are already healthcare professionals. We believe that preventative interventions should also be provided during medical school with the hope that this will improve personal and patient outcomes (Kemp et al, 2019).

In healthcare, mindfulness has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression and burnout (Rosenzweig et al, 2003; Hassed et al, 2009; Erogul et al, 2014). The authors have personally experienced these benefits during a student-selected component of mindfulness training. This was provided by King’s College London in our third year of medicine to increase wellbeing and resilience to stress. The benefit was identified through anecdotal feedback and reflections from individuals in the final session of the training. However, objective evidence of impact was not obtained, therefore this perceived benefit is prone to bias. Additionally, because of the student-selected nature of the training, motivational bias must also be considered.

The General Medical Council (2013) recommends that mindfulness training should be integrated into the medical curriculum. From current literature and our personal experience, we support this and believe that annual follow ups throughout medical school may help to combat burnout. A qualitative method of analysis, appreciating individual thoughts, feelings and opinions, should be used to assess the impact of the mindfulness training.

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## References

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**How to cite this article:**

Goralwalla M, Ali N, Younes A, Badar M, Khanom T. Why tackling burnout is important: a student perspective. *Br J Hosp Med.* 2020. <https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2020.0318>