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WORK STRESS, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND BURNOUT IN JUNIOR DOCTORS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Background: Burnout is known to be higher in doctors than in the general population and is associated with adverse patient outcomes. By identifying factors that can lead to burnout, interventions can be implemented to support the health of the workforce and improve patient care.

Aim: The aim of this study is to (1) look at whether psychiatric trainees differ from medical trainees in the work-related stress they experience and the social support they perceive, within and outside the workplace. It also aims to (2) look at whether social support can mediate the stressor-burnout relationship in trainees.

Method: The sample consisted of 184 London based trainees. Participants were administered the Maslach Burnout Inventory (strain), the Specialist Doctors' Stress Inventory (stressors) and the House and Wells social support scale. To explore the pathways and potential mediating effect of social support within the stressor-burnout relationship structural equation modeling was applied to the data.

Results: 42% of all doctors exhibited high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Medical trainees were significantly more burnt out than psychiatric trainees ($p < .01$). Occupational stressors were significantly correlated with the core burnout dimensions. Family, consultant and top management support demonstrated significant correlations with burnout dimensions whereas co-worker support failed to reach significance. Direct, indirect and mediational pathways between study variables were found.

Conclusion: Psychological distress is still prevalent amongst our junior workforce. Medical trainees appear to exhibit more severe levels of burnout and suggestions to improve psychological wellbeing are discussed.