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Designing quality improvement in doctors own healthcare

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Objective:

The Health in Practice (HiP) Programme is the response of the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) to the expressed healthcare needs of Irish GPs to optimise their healthcare. It is based on a national Needs Assessment (n=495), literature reviews, extensive consultation and ongoing evaluation. Doctors' families may access the service, as they are recognised to be a group who also need a customised healthcare structure.

Methods:

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Appreciate the doctor-defined need to deliver a quality healthcare service for doctors.
2. Understand the challenges of delivering healthcare to doctors and being a doctor who receives healthcare
3. Recognise the measures taken by the ICGP to scope implement and evaluate a healthcare system specifically for doctors.

Relevance: Help-seeking attitudes and behaviours of medical professionals follow similar patterns in many countries, including denial of symptoms and delays in accessing healthcare from medical colleagues even for serious symptoms. Observing best practice, the ICGP has put in place a system to facilitate a cultural change to improve the quality of delivery of healthcare to GPs.

Description: HiP is a formal confidential system of proactive and reactive healthcare health information and education for GPs. This service has two main elements, (i) Healthcare Networks and (ii) Education and Information Service; both working together for quality improvement.

- (i) is a confidential system of healthcare delivered by 4 networks of established independent formally selected health professionals: GPs, Psychiatrists, Psychotherapists and Occupational Physicians. Networks benefit from a range of peer support mechanisms.
- (ii) Responds to individual queries and provides group workshops, presentations and publications Links with ICGP Management in Practice programme, promoting good practice management.

Results:

Healthcare, Education and the Information Service are being utilised for a wide range of issues by doctors to address their physical and psychological health. This model of healthcare for doctors formally addresses quality issues in doctors' healthcare compared to informal healthcare pathways traditionally used by doctors. Doctors are trained to be doctors, and specifically, not to be patients. Therefore, doctors need education for the role of being a patient and the role of doctors' doctor.

Analysis:

HiPP's model of care acknowledges that the role and lifestyle of the physician can influence the health beliefs and health status of physicians. HiPP addresses these factors through provision of formal pathways to care, health information and relevant education. The service is also being used by doctors from other medical specialties. User feedback has been very positive, also highlighting areas for future service development.

Conclusions:

The ICGP HiP programme believes that to achieve quality healthcare for doctors, the organisation of their healthcare should be specifically focussed on the health needs of this patient group as it is for any other patient sub-group.