

Social Prescribing

Learning about Health and Well-being and Social Determinants of Health

GP attachment in the South West Federation



In 2020/2021 fourth- and fifth-year medical students are given the opportunity to have a Social Prescribing experience during their GP placement in the South West Federation area.

These are mature students and will therefore be able to appreciate the importance of social determinants of health.

Students can book a place via the sub-deanery website.

Mature under-graduate students from other disciplines placed in the SWF at the time of the event or any healthcare professional who recently joined a primary care team in the South-West Federation area are also invited to join.

The acceptance email will have the pre-SP experience questionnaire, self-declaration form for pre-event learning activities and format for reflective piece attached.

Requirements of student:

- book place on SP experience event via sub-deanery website
- fill in pre-SP experience questionnaire
- watch recommended videos and consult websites as per Sub-deanery website
- fill in self-directed learning declaration form
- identify with the help of the tutor a patient who would benefit from SP, discuss the referral with the patient, make the referral
- attend event
- prepare reflective piece on the overall SP experience and share with Primary care team

Tutor:

Tutors will facilitate an hour of self-directed learning early in the fourth- or fifth year placements to fill in the pre-SP experience questionnaires and watch/reflect on the videos/consult specific website on Social Prescribing recommended on the sub-deanery website.

Tutor will help the student to identify a patient who would benefit from SP.

Tutor to facilitate some self-directed learning time to prepare their reflective piece and fill in the SP post-placement questionnaire after the event.

Tutors will facilitate the student presenting their reflective piece to the Primary care team (this can be by having a short internal lunch time (virtual) gathering or by sharing a short video the student prepared explained their SP experience.

Learning outcomes:

- learn about Social prescribing and integrated care
- learn about Social Determinants of Health (SDH)
- learn about population health- what are the local issues? How can SP help to address these? What other initiatives can help (eg. Integrated Care Partnership)?
- learn about personalised care and 'activation'

Social prescribing event SWF

Dates

Thursday 15/10/20 PM
Thursday 19/11/20 PM
Thursday 7/1/2021 PM
Thursday 4/2021 PM

In 2020-2021, due to COVID19 restrictions the SP experience will be on-line or in small groups in outdoor or large spaces where physical distancing can be maintained.

It is envisaged the SP experience can be easily converted to a 'real life' events when restrictions are lifted as connections will be established and booking system will be in place,

SP Organisations in SWF:

Oak Health Living Centre (OHL), Lisnaskea

mPower, Fermanagh

Arc Healthy Living (AHL), Irvinestown

Early Intervention Hub, Omagh

SP 'event'/activity (depending on what SP organisation/link worker can offer):

-group of students to 'accompany' (virtually?) link worker to do a Health and Well-being plan or follow up a client

-group of students to come to centre (OHL or AHL) if physical distancing can be managed

-link in to Webinar organised by Spring Social prescribing (eg. Chronic pain, falls prevention etc.) and short discussion with link worker after event

-actively being involved in 'befriending'

-volunteer at 'drop-in' centre

-attend an Early Intervention Hub meeting (virtual)

Student to prepare a reflective piece on how referral to SP activity may benefit their patient, their SP experience/participation in event. This will be shared with the rest of the team.

This has the function of **enhancing shared learning** between staff and increasing awareness of community resources. It has the potential to lead to an increased utilisation of the services that are already in place in the local communities. The student SP experience may serve as an important feedback loop that increases trust and collaboration from primary care to third sector services (Tierney et al., 2020). As various Healthcare professionals could be attending the event there will be an Interprofessional Learning component.

Concepts and background:

Social prescribing is when health professionals refer patients to support in the community, in order to improve their health and wellbeing.

SP recognises that a large proportion of health outcomes are the result of the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health.

SP acknowledges the need for patients to have to access non-clinical resources and to empower patients to co-design their own personalised solutions thus enabling them to improve their own health and wellbeing (Polley et al., 2016).

With around 20% of patients consulting their GP for what is primarily a social problem, using a social prescribing approach widens the scope of what is possible to do as a community of health practitioners (Polley et al., 2016) and offers healthcare workers opportunities to practice medicine holistically.

General Practice has at its core the principle of holistic assessment and treatment of patients therefore the GP clinical placement is an ideal time for the UG student to experience and participate in SP. It fits with learning objectives of the placement and the ability of the local educational lead/tutor to facilitate reflection on the experience. In Northern Ireland there are various organisations involved and the availability and specifics of referral pathways and the options of community activities vary per locality.

The Social prescribing experience during the UG GP clinical placement also sits well with the 'Outcomes for Graduates' as set out by the GMC (2018):

be able to care for growing numbers of patients with multiple morbidities and long term physical and mental health conditions

be able to provide integrated care, including mental health care, with social care

be able to apply principles of health promotion and disease prevention at population level to the care of individual patients

recognise the complex medical needs, goals and priorities of patients, the factors that can affect a patient's health and wellbeing and how these interact. These include psychological and sociological considerations that can also affect patients' health (p11)

demonstrate working collaboratively with other health and care professionals and organisations when working with patients, particularly those with multiple morbidities, frailty and long term physical and mental conditions (p12)

recognise sociological factors that contribute to illness, the course of the disease and the success of treatment and apply these to the care of patients – including issues relating to health inequalities and the social determinants of health, the links between occupation and health, and the effects of poverty and affluence (p22)

explain the concept of wellness or wellbeing as well as illness, and be able to help and empower people to achieve the best health possible, including promoting lifestyle changes (p 23)

assess, by taking a history, the environmental, social, psychological, behavioural and cultural factors influencing a patient's presentation,....(p23)

A recent UK-wide evaluation of student perception and awareness of SP highlighted significant lack of awareness regarding SP amongst UK medical students with 93% of respondents not having heard of the concept of SP prior to a teaching session led linked with NHS England's National SP Student Champion Scheme (Santoni et al., 2019).

This study highlighted that new strategies are needed to ensure the doctors of tomorrow are equipped with the necessary tools to achieve the recent outcomes for graduates and implement plans for the NHS and general practice which highlight the importance of personalised care (Santoni et al., 2019).

The formal education and mentoring offered through a social prescribing attachment within a general practice placement has the potential to play an integral role in shaping values and beliefs amongst tomorrow's doctors. Engagement with these services as a medical student means that considering social prescribing as a future doctor is more likely to occur automatically (Santoni et al., 2019).

QUB led a SP pilot for fourth year medical students on GP placements in the academic year 20/21. Dr. Helen Reid collated some qualitative feedback from some students involved in the pilot, all of which was supportive of the experience and provided evidence of transformative learning for some students as indicated in the following quotes.

'Drugs, as even he recognised, would not help him, but maybe tapping into his social, economic and psychological deficits might help.'

'I gained a greater empathy for social circumstances of individual patients'

'The couple were very satisfied with the support that was offered to them, and xxx will be working closely with them as they move forward together with the program.'

'.....actually found it quite overwhelming seeing the positive impact on individuals lives from both a mental and physical perspective'

Challenges and obstacles:

-COVID19 restrictions

-capacity in CVS/SP organisations

-from QUB Pilot:

transport issues

GP practices already having an established student timetable

These challenges are overcome by having a 'virtual' experience and having it organised locally (transport/combined timetable)

-from article of JH Lewis:

"Barriers to integrating SDH (Social Determinants of Health) in curricula were identified: addressing SDH is outside the realm of physician responsibility, space in curriculum is limited, faculty lack knowledge and skills to teach material, and concepts are not adequately represented on certifying examinations.

Conclusion: Despite the influence of SDH on individual and population health, programs do not routinely prioritize SDH education on par with basic or clinical sciences."

Integrating it into GP placements and facilitation of experience-based learning event by experienced local educators are the proposed solutions to these challenges

Evaluation and future planning

- pre- and post-event evaluation for students, tutors and SP organisations/link workers
- in the future the student could be paired with a patient for longer- longitudinal engagement- fits with longitudinal clerkships as per Queens Medical school's new curriculum (C25)
- consider organising an (annual) Day of Celebration (local or regional)- students to present their SP experience by poster or video
- Interprofessional learning-UG students from different professions (eg. nursing and medical student) to be linked together with a client

References:

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Tierney S, Wong G, Roberts N, Boylan A, Park S, Abrams R, et al (2020). Supporting social prescribing in primary care by linking people to local assets: a realist review. BMC Medicine; 18(1).

Santoni