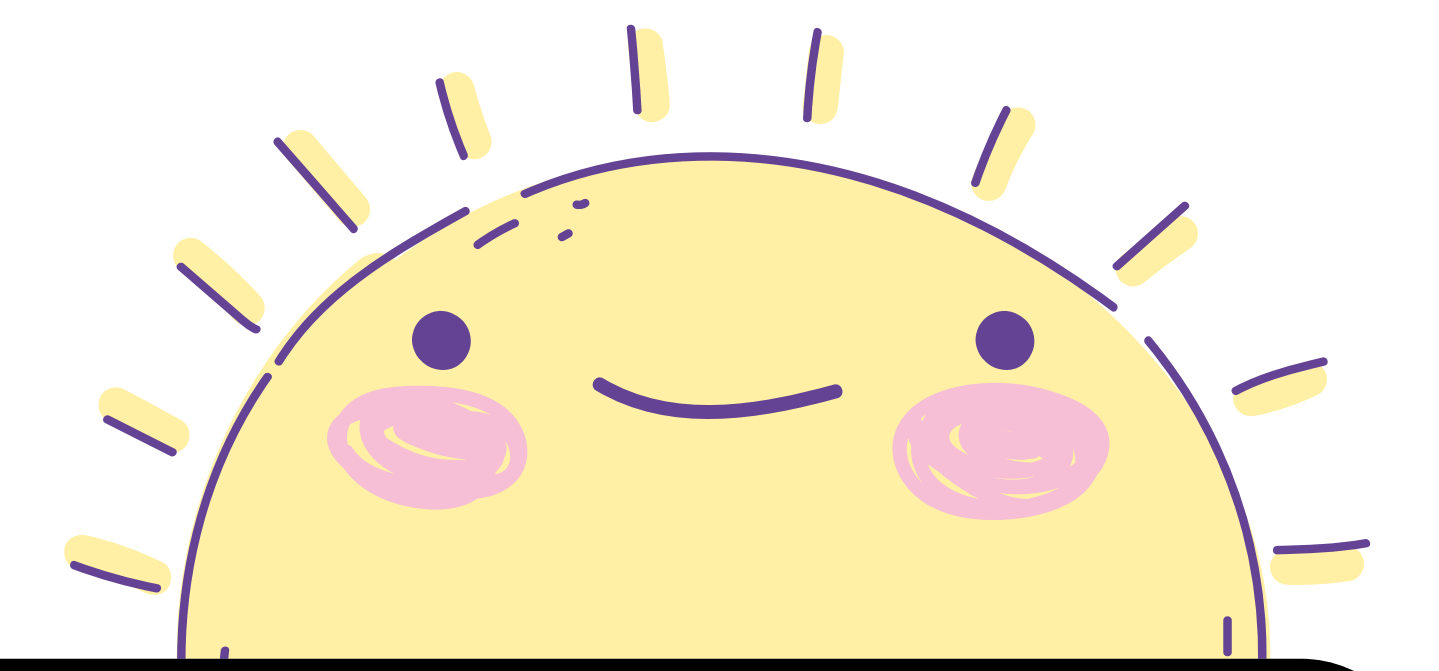


How are medical student preconceptions affecting our future doctors?

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Background

The pursuit of a career in medicine has traditionally been regarded as a noble and fulfilling path. However, with industrial action and job dissatisfaction amongst doctors at an all-time high its reputation is in danger, especially with those pursuing it as a future career. Our study initially explored the hidden curriculum within medical education—the implicit, unspoken messages conveyed through the culture, norms, and behaviours of the learning environment and its potential influence on shaping the perceptions, values, and professional identity of aspiring doctors.

Methodology

We conducted face-to-face interviews with 10 students on clinical placement in East Kent. We explored their perceptions and experiences of the hidden curriculum and analysed the transcripts using phenomenological data analysis.

Results

An overwhelming number of students shared negative messages they had received about working as a doctor in the NHS and agreed that this has impacted them. 50% of students recounted negative career advice by medical professionals and family, with the re-occurring themes of the NHS being an unappealing place to work, competitive specialty applications and a worry about work life balance. 3/10 students stated that their experiences have changed their perspective of being a doctor. All of the students agreed that awareness of the hidden curriculum could have better prepared them for their clinical placements.

Don't go into medicine, escape the NHS!

I think NHS is a difficult place to work, it's not worth it anymore.

It makes you question if you made the right decision.

I think it's definitely made me rethink a couple times, if I actually want to be here.

Discussion

The ways in which medical students shape their professional identity significantly affects not only their personal well-being but also influences the dynamics of their relationships with colleagues and patients. (Monrouxe, 2009). Building their career on such a foundation, will be detrimental to their future career, health and well-being. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to combat this harmful ethos. The first step would be identifying and exposing the origins of these preconceptions and implementing this into the student curriculum

Take-Home message

The well-being of doctors is best tackled before it becomes an issue, the portrayal of the NHS and medicine as a career needs to be addressed urgently in order to give our future doctors the best start.

