



PRESS RELEASE

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Talks at No 10 about Suicide Prevention by Bereaved Mother and 'Points of Light' winner.

Ann Feloy, Founder of Olly's Future suicide prevention charity, spoke to Policy Unit officials at No 10 Downing Street on Friday, calling for all medical students to have suicide prevention as part of their core curriculum.

Every year 7,500 students graduate from medical schools across the UK with varying or sometimes very little understanding of how to talk to patients about suicide. The subject is not taught as part of the core curriculum.

Ann founded her charity after losing her son Oliver Hare to suicide on 14th February, 2017, two days before his 23rd birthday. She believes failings by her local GP practise were part of the reason he took his own life.

Ann said: "It is imperative doctors have this training and yet it is not taught as part of the core curriculum. My charity now works with medical schools across the UK teaching suicide prevention skills but funding needs to come front the government to show

There is a higher risk of depression and suicide ideation among medical students than the general population (<https://www.bmj.com/content/357/sbmj.j1460>) and medics are twice as likely to die by suicide than the general population. Recent ONS data indicate that more than one UK medical professional took their own life every week in 2020. (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/suicidesinthemedicalprofession>).

Since 2015 the number of patients per GP has increased by 19%, and GPs report that 40% of their appointments are related to mental health (source: Mind). Due to increasing workloads, burnout is happening at a much younger age [among doctors] when it used to happen later in their careers. https://www.som.org.uk/sites/som.org.uk/files/LTF_SOM_mental_health_of_doctors.pdf

Dr SAMS (Suicide Awareness in Medical Students) was developed to address the lack of uniformity of existing suicide prevention training for medical students across the UK and internationally. In addition to learning ten practical tools to talk about (and prevent) suicide, students learn a set of skills to increase self-reflection and self-compassion, so they are better equipped to support their own wellbeing, their peers, and future patients.




The British Medical Journal (April 2023) reported that "Medical students face high levels of mental health problems but stigma stops them getting help" and a Royal Medical Benevolent Fund study found that 68% of medical students surveyed have experienced mental health pressure during their medical degree, yet 50% say they would have concerns about seeking support for mental illness as a medical student.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/381/bmj.p933>

Professor Faye Gishen, Director of UCL Medical School, wrote in the BMJ (Sept '19) that "we have a duty of care to our future doctors" and that "as a profession, we need to discuss suicide openly, and extend these discussions beyond patients to include our colleagues and students. Suicide is the most common avoidable cause of death in young people. There is an allied and growing literature around medical student perfectionism, anxiety, depression, burnout, and suicidal ideation, and the data suggest that stigma and fear of fitness to practise sequelae can inhibit medical students seeking help."

In 2020, Olly's Future received funding from the British Medical Association (BMA) to set-up its Dr SAMS (Suicide Awareness in Medical Students) project in Brighton and Sussex Medical School. The programme combined Olly's Future's flagship 'Talking About Suicide: Ten Tools' (TAS10) 90-minute online suicide prevention training and its 90 minute online 'Reflective CareSpaces'. There is an optional MENTAL Health Open Mic Nights held on campus.

Breakdown of Dr SAMS provision

 <p><u>Talking About Suicide: Ten Tools</u></p> <p>Delivered by a trainer and assisted by emotional support, the training teaches how to spot the signs of someone struggling with thoughts of suicide, equipping participants with practical ways to ask someone whether they are thinking about suicide.</p>	 <p><u>Reflective CareSpaces</u></p> <p>Delivered by a facilitator and assisted by emotional support, participants recognise and prioritise their own mental health needs and learn how to seek help themselves and also support their peers on their course. Ten self-compassion techniques are taught.</p>	 <p><u>MENTal Health Open Mic Nights</u></p> <p>Hosted by a facilitator, the main speakers are the audience themselves. These events particularly target men (least likely demographic to speak out/ask for help) and provide a safe and friendly space to talk about mental health with peers</p>
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Progress

The programme is now in its fourth year, having now expanded to six medical schools (Brighton and Sussex, Canterbury Christ Church, Cardiff, Exeter, Kent and Medway and UCL) and trained over 1,910 medical school students. Some funding is still provided by the BMA, however participating medical schools now fund this themselves, often including it in their core curricula. The first two taught

parts of the initiative costs £30 per student and some 150 students can be taught in one morning online.

Future Plans

Olly's Future's vision is to see all medical schools teach suicide prevention as part of its core curriculum to reduce suicides and change the culture in the medical profession. Working with UCL, we aim to develop a 'Training for Trainer' (T4T) programme in order to flexibly and rapidly expand the number of medical schools we can engage with, through their own in-house delivery. In 2023, one of our trustees was given a Churchill Fellowship award to visit medical schools in America, Canada, and India this spring to develop potential international collaboration.

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