BMA quarterly tracker survey

Current views from across the medical profession
Quarter 1: March 2016

Public Health and Healthcare Delivery
Background

– The BMA’s Public Health and Healthcare Delivery function (PHHD) manages an **online panel** of approximately **2,600 member doctors**.

– The panel is broadly representative of the main areas of medical practice and is used for quarterly tracker surveys on topical health questions. This quarter’s survey focuses on new technology.

– The tracker survey has been recently revised, and will now focus on one topical issue per quarter. The survey also includes recurrent questions on workload, morale and work-life balance. These will be repeated every quarter.

– The survey also allows for additional questions on other issues – if you are a health organisation interested in working with us, contact info.phhd@bma.org.uk.
Methodology

– For this quarter, the quarterly tracker survey was sent to the whole panel.
– Panel members were emailed a link to the online survey between 3 March and 17 March 2016.
– 1,053 replies were received. Of these responses, 109 were removed as they were not currently working or had retired. This produced a total of 944 usable responses (a response rate of 27%).
– The following analysis includes comparisons across branches of medical practice.
Respondents: branch of medical practice

Consultants and GPs were the largest groups to respond to the survey; this reflects the composition of the UK medical workforce.

Junior doctors are under-represented in the survey compared to the workforce.

“Other” doctors includes respondents that were working in medical academia, public health or outside one of the main fields of practice. This group was aggregated due to small sample sizes.

Question: What grade is your current post?
Respondents: working pattern

Just under three in ten respondents were working less than full time.

Question: Are you working: full time, less than full time, unemployed, on a career break, on maternity leave, retired?

- Full-time: 69.3% (654)
- Less than full-time: 30.7% (290)
Current morale
17% of respondents reported their morale as being high or very high.

Conversely, 54% reported their morale as being low or very low.

On average, reported morale is lower than in the last two quarters.

Question: Taking everything into account, how would you describe your current level of morale?
Average morale by branch of practice

Using a 5-point scale (1 = very low, 3 = moderate, 5 = very high) the mean morale scores can be compared across branches of practice.

For all branches of practice, average morale is below moderate.

Junior doctors in training now report the lowest morale, whereas in our previous survey they reported the highest morale compared to other branches of practice (3.0 in November 2015).

Question: Taking everything into account, how would you describe your current level of morale?
Work-life balance
Satisfaction with work-life balance

The mean satisfaction with work-life balance across all branches of practice has increased slightly this quarter.

However, junior doctors’ mean satisfaction has dropped from 5.3 last quarter to 4.9 this quarter.

GPs again reported being least satisfied with their work-life balance.

Question: Overall, how satisfied are you with your work-life balance nowadays? (Please give your answer on a scale of nought to 10, where nought is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘completely satisfied’)
Current workload
Working outside regular hours in the last month by branch of practice

Consistent with all previous editions of the Omnibus survey, this quarter shows that GPs are most likely to report “always” working outside their regular hours.

Question: In the last month, how often have you worked/trained outside your regular hours?
New technology
Do doctors possess all the technology in their immediate environments (eg office or consulting room) that is essential to their roles?

Within their immediate environment, nearly 70% of GPs stated they completely or mostly possessed technology essential to their role, compared to 42.5% of junior doctors in training.

Question: Thinking about your immediate environment (eg office or consulting room), to what extent would you say you possess all of the technology essential to your role?
Do doctors possess all the technology in their wider working environment (e.g., hospital, GP practice) that is essential to their roles?

In their wider working environment, nearly 55% of GPs stated they completely or mostly possessed technology essential to their role, compared with around 40% of junior doctors in training.

Question: Thinking about your wider working environment (e.g., hospital, GP practice), to what extent would you say you possess all of the technology essential to your role?
Would new technology improve doctor’s ability to give the best possible care to patients?

The majority of doctors agreed that new technology would improve their ability to give the best possible care to patients.

Question: To what extent do you think new technology would improve your ability to give the best possible care to patients that you see?
Areas where doctors would welcome the availability of new or improved technology

Technology relating to access to integrated patient records was the most often selected option across all branches of practice. Giving patients access to their own records online was the least favourable option at nearly 15% across all branches of practice.

Further analysis of the “other” comments revealed the following five additional areas where respondents would welcome new technology: 1) printing equipment 2) general IT systems 3) clinical equipment 4) patient record and appointment systems 5) speech recognition software for consultations/dictation.

Question: In which of the following areas would you welcome the availability of new or improved technology?
Top three areas in which doctors would welcome the availability of new or improved technology by branch of practice

Question: In which of the following areas would you welcome the availability of new or improved technology?

Access to integrated patient records (from multiple care settings)
- Fully electronic patient records
- Mobile devices or apps to assist in clinical practice
- Electronic decision aids

Bar chart showing the percentage of doctors in each category that would welcome the availability of new or improved technology in each area.