

Medical students committee: report to ARM 2022 audio transcript

Khadija: Hi. We're Khadija and Lara and as co-chairs of the MSC this year has focused on changing the culture of how being political is integral to being a medical student and equipping students with tools to create change that can actually be seen on the ground in everyday ways that are manageable alongside studies.

The BMA Medical Students Committee, MSC, represents students on a national level and in wider BMA policy. This report is an overview of our initiatives this term.

Lara: To address the legacy of COVID 19, we contributed to the independent review of the pandemic. We supported members that took up voluntary and non-voluntary roles during the outbreak of the Omicron variant.

Khadija: Last year, students were disappointed by changes made to their medical education without transparent consultation or communication. Medical students this year received inconsistent communication on the opening of the SJT window. Students with reasonable adjustments struggled to book their exams at all, and an SJT paper with rationale was not equally visible for all students sitting the exam. After holding them to account, they openly apologised to students for their poor handling of the SJT booking and have promised that the lessons learned document will be published soon. Addressing historical issues with the removal of EAS by the UKFPO last year, we ensured student input into further changes to the foundation allocation process metrics and protected the needs of marginalised student groups and pre allocation criteria reforms.

Lara: We continue to monitor the piloting of medical apprenticeships and blended learning degrees. We have raised practical concerns about the impacts on NHS resources and the possibility of exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. We have met regularly with the GMC

and Medical Schools Council to discuss the MLA and feed into preparatory information, resources and webinars for students.

We have also advocated against perpetuating stereotypes in the AKT questions. In March, as co-chairs, we publicly condemned governmental failures that led to the oversubscription of the foundation program by 791 applicants. These were issues we raised earlier in an exchange with the health minister.

All UK graduates have now had a foundation post confirmed, and the reserve list allocations were released earlier this year than usual in April. Despite small wins, we know that the number of graduates entering the foundation program is set to increase and it is more important than ever to ensure all are guaranteed jobs at the end of their training.

Khadija: Our survey showed that harassment on placement continues, despite promises made on anti-racism in 2020. Signing the BMA racial harassment charter is only the beginning. We are therefore asking schools to collect and share examples of good practice to ensure accountability.

We have been developing a guide on protecting the rights and compensation for students, working with staff to advocate for all types of curriculum changes and working with stakeholders such as the Medical Schools Council, ASME and grassroots student groups to keep decolonization and safe reporting systems on the agenda.

We've launched the first medical student survey in three years to cover all aspects of the medical student experience. In terms of finance, a key finding was that over a third felt the NHS bursary wouldn't cover basic living costs and 63.6% had to take on additional work to support studies. We are therefore increasing national attention on severe financial student hardship and supporting the Liveable NHS Bursary campaign and developing a public affairs strategy to lobby for increased funding., presenting evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee.

Lara: We know student welfare and widening participation are important priorities to our committee and members. Our committee has developed a wellbeing charter for medical schools, providing a baseline expectation of the support services they should provide. We

have also run a social media campaign on student experiences with SPLDs on accessing a diagnosis whilst at medical school.

We have strengthened our relationship with widening participating charities, established a pan BMA position paper on widening participation, and continue to develop our widening access resources on our website.

Our first in-person medical student conference in two years had the timely theme of Unmasked - the injustice and health crises hidden by the pandemic. This was brilliantly executed by our conference chair Callum, deputy Mattie, agenda committee Neeraj and Ethan, Anna and the secretariat. We welcomed reps from new medical schools and officially defined the roles and responsibilities of an MSC rep and handover expectations.

Khadija: Acknowledging the need for student specific responses to international situations, crises and human rights abuses, we introduced the establishment of the international affairs subcommittee into policy and responded in MSC to oppression in Ukraine, Palestine and Jinjiang.

Lara: Thank you to our secretariat, exec committee Kayode, Ayla, Aidan, Raymond, Anna, Marguerite, Iona, Becky, and the devolved nation chairs, Lewis, Ellen and Victoria and all our MSC reps for their hard work. Please engage with the MSC because we believe it giving students the tools to make changes, they are passionate about.

Check out our annual conference via our website and if you'd like to know more about our work or give any feedback. Please get in touch at info.students@bma.org.uk.

Khadija: We welcome accountability, criticism and helping everyone get involved, no matter how new you are to the BMA. Thank you.

Lara Akinnawonu and Khadija Meghrawi

Medical students committee co-chair