

The stair climb challenge: a holistic approach to maintaining medical professionalism at North Bristol NHS Trust

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Introduction

The Royal College of Physicians highlights the impact effective teamwork has on improving morale, reducing stress, and improving patient outcomes and safety.¹ The General Medical Council (GMC) recommends doctors maintain their professionalism through 'good relationships with patients and colleagues'.² Our stair climb challenge was organised within Southmead Hospital, North Bristol NHS Trust (NBT) with the aim to improve teamwork, fitness, staff morale and wellbeing. NBT is aiming to be carbon net zero by 2030 as part of the Green Plan and we aimed to reduce elevator usage and change behaviour to encourage hospital sustainability.³ The stair climb challenge aimed to create a non-clinical, fun, competitive environment to challenge hospital employees to climb 100 flights per week, for 6 weeks. The pandemic has highlighted the need for prioritising staff morale and wellbeing and our charity challenge encompassed our desire to enhance this message for all employees in all areas of the trust.

Materials and methods

Pre-challenge baseline data was collected for 1 week from a range of respiratory multidisciplinary team members. The challenge was supported by the Southmead Hospital Charity in conjunction with the wellbeing and communication teams and advertised throughout all departments to recruit participants. Over a 6-week period, April to May 2021, participants worked in teams of up to six, collecting data and logging the number of flights climbed. All participants received a unique 'challenger' badge which alerted colleagues to their involvement. Prizes were donated from local businesses and awarded to winning individuals, teams and the highest fundraiser. A post-challenge survey assessing impact was sent out to participants.

Results and discussion

Baseline data showed an average number of flights climbed of 56 per person. There was a total of 20 teams and 88 participants. During the challenge a total of 57,145 flights were logged, averaging to 108 flights per person, equivalent to a 93% increase from baseline. This also equates to 131,434 calories burned and a 2,394 kg CO₂ emission saving. A total of £1,507 was raised for

the hospital charity. The winning climber climbed two thirds the height of Mount Everest (2,595 flights) and the winning team twice the height of Mount Kilimanjaro (5,615 flights).⁴ Post-survey data demonstrated the most enjoyable aspects were teamwork and bonding, improved fitness and the fun nature of this challenge. 100% of responders reported feeling their mood improve during this challenge.

Conclusion

This challenge demonstrated that key aspects of medical professionalism, such as teamwork and communication, can be challenged and encouraged in a non-clinical environment across all members of the multidisciplinary team. Additional benefits also include contributing to trust sustainability, benefiting staff fitness and wellbeing, and funding for the hospital charity, ultimately providing improved care for patients at Southmead. As we learn to live with the pandemic and fluctuating stressors in our hospital environment, it is key to devise innovative ways to encourage comradery and wellbeing to improve workforce resilience across all levels of the multidisciplinary team. The North Bristol NHS Trust stair climb challenge achieved just that. ■

References

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