



## Strokephobia Study Questionnaire

To investigate self-perceived competence and attitudes of 'middle tier' medical trainees to the practice and specialty of Stroke Medicine

Dear Doctor,

We are interested in 'middle tier' doctors' experience, perceived competence and attitudes toward the practice and specialty of stroke medicine.

There is a national shortage of doctors training and qualifying in stroke medicine. Anecdotally, we are aware that some doctors describe fear of working in stroke and covering the stroke bleep, especially in the out of hours period. We want to understand more about doctors' experience of stroke medicine, at both under and post graduate level.

You are invited to participate in this study by completing our anonymous questionnaire, which should take less than 15 minutes. By clicking on this [LINK TO STROKE QUESTIONNAIRE](#) you consent to participate. Please complete the questionnaire before **FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> July 2023**.

We are very thankful to you for taking the time to do this.

*Dr Enda Kerr, Dr Roisin Trainor, Dr Louise Alexander, Dr Jim McIlmoyle*

If you have any issues related to this study please contact [e.kerr@qub.ac.uk](mailto:e.kerr@qub.ac.uk) or [roisin.trainor@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:roisin.trainor@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

## Participant Information Leaflet

**Study Title:** To investigate self-perceived competence and attitudes of 'middle tier' medical trainees to the practice and specialty of Stroke Medicine

**Investigator(s):** Dr Enda Kerr, Queen's University Belfast. Dr Roisin Trainor, British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians.

### Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

### Who is organising and funding the study?

Dr Enda Kerr, Queen's University Belfast, is organising this study, which is not funded.

### What is the study about?

Stroke Medicine is one of the newest medical subspecialties. Trainees can enter Stroke Medicine training from a variety of routes, eg neurology, geriatric medicine, acute medicine and rehabilitation medicine. Numbers of trainees entering subspecialty training in Stroke Medicine are well below that required, and there are large numbers of unfilled consultant stroke specialist posts in the UK [1]. Stroke Medicine is also one of the most rapidly developing specialties in medicine, with a constantly expanding evidence base for hyperacute and interventional treatments. What doctors learned about stroke as undergraduates is often outdated by the time they are working as core medical trainees.

Anecdotally, trainees describe trepidation when covering stroke, especially out of hours. The doctor in the hospital medical team carrying the stroke bleep out of hours is often the one who has 'drawn the short straw'.

'Neurophobia' is a well described phenomenon in medical graduates [2], where doctors' self-perceived competence in neurological examination and disease is poor, resulting in difficulties of application of skill to clinical situations. A lack of exposure to high quality under- and post-graduate training in neurology, as well as the perceived difficulty of the subject, have been reported to result in neurophobia [3]. We coin the term 'Strokephobia' and propose that it may have similar origins to neurophobia. We seek to explore the self-perceived competence and attitudes of middle tier doctors in training to stroke diagnosis and management, as well as to the specialty itself, to understand strokephobia better. A more detailed understanding of strokephobia could inform local and national policies on training doctors, and help guide workforce planning.

1. Iacobucci G. NHS is urged to increase number of stroke specialists by a third to tackle "serious shortfall". *BMJ* 2019;366:l4740
2. Jozefowicz R. Neurophobia: The Fear of Neurology Among Medical Students. *Arch Neurol.* 1994;51(4):328-329.
3. Moreno-Zambrano D, Sandrone S, MezaVenegas J, Jimenez J, Freire-Bonifacini A, Santibanez-Vasquez R, Garcia-Santibanez R. Exploring the key factors behind neurophobia: A systematic review of the English, Spanish and Portuguese literature. *Brain Disorders.* 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dscb.2021.100011>

## **What would taking part involve?**

Participants are invited to take part by completing an online questionnaire in Microsoft Forms format. Detailed responses to open questions are encouraged. The questionnaire should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

There are limited questions relating to demographic characteristics included as this data may indicate whether patterns of knowledge or attitudes in relation to stroke medicine vary according to characteristics.

Your responses are anonymous. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can choose to withdraw your participation up to two weeks after completion, without giving a reason, by contacting us.

### **Inclusion criteria for participation:**

- Middle tier doctors in training in Northern Ireland, ie F2/ IMT/ GPST

### **Exclusion criteria:**

- Foundation Year 1 (F1), Specialty Trainee (ST), Non-training grade (eg Specialty doctors/ Staff grades), and locum doctors
- Medical students
- Consultants

## **Do I have to take part?**

No. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and choosing not to take part will not affect you in any way. You can choose to withdraw your participation up to two weeks after completion, without giving a reason, by contacting us.

## **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

By exploring the experience and attitudes of doctors in training to stroke medicine, we hope to inform efforts to improve doctors' working experience and training in stroke medicine, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

## **What are the possible disadvantages, side effects or risks, of taking part in this study?**

A time commitment (< 15 minutes) will be needed to complete the study questionnaire. The study intends to explore self perceived competence and attitudes to stroke medicine. Questions have been designed to focus attention on general experiences in the practical working environment of hospital stroke medicine. In participating, it is possible that you may recall some degree of previous distress in relation to stressful work experiences. While these experiences could be of value to the study, you are not obliged to share distressing, personal experiences. If you feel uncomfortable about answering a question, you do not have to answer that question. You can choose not to answer any questions that you find difficult.

If you wish to discuss any queries or experiences in relation to study participation, you can contact the lead researcher, Dr Enda Kerr, [e.kerr@gub.ac.uk](mailto:e.kerr@gub.ac.uk)

## **Expenses and payments**

No payment will be available to participants.

## **Will my taking part be kept confidential?**

Training grade, age, gender, university of primary medical qualification, and current health trust will be recorded, should you choose to provide this information. A study number will be assigned to protect your identity this will be stored in a password protected document. Names will not be recorded. We will ensure that recording of any details that might identify you will be minimised.

We aim to undertake thematic analysis of free text responses using Nvivo (software commonly used in managing this type of information in research). Any necessary information will be typed up and stored in a password protected Queen's University computer. When the results of this study are being shared, quotes may be used to illustrate the points expressed by participants. Quotes will be accompanied by an anonymous subject label, e.g. S1F26 = Survey subject 1, female, age 26.

## **What will happen to the data collected about me?**

As a publicly-funded organisation, Queen's University Belfast have to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use information from people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, such as this, we will only use your data in the ways needed to conduct and analyse the research study.

We will be using information provided by you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. We are committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with data protection legislation. Dr Enda Kerr is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

## **Data Sharing**

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. The Queen's University Belfast has in place policies and procedures to keep your data safe.

For further information, please refer to Queen's University Belfast Privacy Notice for Research Participants which is available here:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/privacynotice/Research/ListofResearchPrivacyNotices/PrivacyNoticeforResearchParticipants.html>

## **What will happen if I don't want to carry on being part of the study?**

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can choose to withdraw your participation, without giving a reason, by contacting us by email no later than 2 weeks after completion.

If you withdraw from the study after this, it may not be possible to withdraw your data which has already been collected, after it has been analysed and included in any shared reports or results. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible and keep the data secure in line with the University's Information and Data Compliance policies.

## **What will happen to the results of the study?**

We will publish the results of the survey in a relevant medical journal, and at regional/ national

stroke medicine conferences, e.g. UK Stroke Forum. Results will be shared with all stroke teams across Northern Ireland by email and will be discussed at regional stroke service implementation groups. Results will be shared with the Training and Education Committee of the British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians (BIASP). Results will also be shared via the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency monthly newsletter.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by Queen's University Belfast Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee (reference number awaited XXXXXXX) and by Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency Quality Management Group.

**Who should I contact if I want further information?**

Dr Enda Kerr [e.kerr@qub.ac.uk](mailto:e.kerr@qub.ac.uk) or Dr Roisin Trainor [roisin.trainor@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:roisin.trainor@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Information Compliance Unit at 028 9027 2576 or [databreach@qub.ac.uk](mailto:databreach@qub.ac.uk)

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

**Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Leaflet**