

StudentShapers Recruitment: Calling all 1st and 2nd year medical students

Physical activity in the Lifestyle Medicine and Prevention module: do we practice what we preach?

Bursary: £325 per week, for five weeks maximum (further details below).

Who should apply:

Any 1st or 2nd year medical students on the MBBS course that have taken part in the Lifestyle medicine and prevention module with a genuine interest in the topic and project.

You must be free for five weeks, full-time (though less than full time of minimum 0.6 if required for special circumstances.) between the dates of 28th June 2021 - 2th August 2021.*

**Dates can be flexible but would need to be during summer holidays for medical students so as not to disrupt studies and also to allow for a summer break.*

Campus/Location: South Kensington Campus with opportunity to engage virtually

Project details:

On the Lifestyle medicine and prevention programme and one of the things we teach about is the importance of physical activity in health and wellbeing. This year, with the majority of students and faculty sitting behind cameras for teaching and the general effect of the pandemic – most of us are less active.

The Chief Medical Officer guidelines suggest breaking up sitting time, even by 1-2 minutes regularly and this is what we teach about in the module. Yet the environment we create for the students is inherently sedentary, even from primary school age we tell children to sit down and stop fidgeting in a learning environment. Inactivity is a really difficult behaviour to change and innately humans want to be inactive, it's our default behaviour. We know as people age, they become less active and that behaviours that are formed in early adulthood, shape behaviours for future years. So in short, we need to get students moving.

We know that physical activity has many benefits – which include but are not limited to improving and protecting cognition and in optimising memory and learning. Physical activity leads to neurogenesis in the hippocampus – a part of the brain that, alongside other functions, plays a vital role in short- and long-term memory. In children and young people, there is evidence to suggest that physical activity improves productivity around homework and revision. Movement breaks can boost mood and reduce stress too. When students are active, they don't just feel better, but are more likely to perform better too.

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There's also evidence to suggest that clinicians' self-awareness of their own health behaviours and commitment to a healthy lifestyle are important in providing more effective support to patients. So in demonstrating the importance of this to future clinicians, we aim to foster a culture of prioritising one's own health and wellbeing, to better serve their patients and align with the NHS forward plan.

When we discussed our students' own barriers for behaviour change to include physical activity during the module, the consistent answer was 'lack of time' and 'busy schedule' which reflects responses from the British Active Students survey and similar work by UK Active and Sport England.

As we transition towards new teaching approaches, we must take student physical activity into account. And think about how can we provide the opportunity for students to be more active, creating a new social norm around physical activity in the university and within the module.

This project aims to co-create meaningful, physically active learning experiences for students and faculty, a really exciting new concept. In building this into our teaching style, we as a medical school are setting the agenda as to how we want to interact with the learning environment, but also more broadly, how we should expect to the environment in which they live and work- a culture that prioritises their health and wellbeing.

Rough outline below (which again is to be co-created and flexible around students ideas):

Plan (flexible in response to students' ideas)

- Week 1: Workshops sharing expertise around physical activity interventions and behaviour change and expertise on student experience of the module and student behaviour. Literature review on the use of physical activity in academic environments with current content. Project plan and mapping out workstream.
- Week 2-4: Review of current content within the module and co-creating resources for module based on developments from week one. Scoping out how meaningful, physically active learning experiences could be addressed at a broader level within the medical school and wider college.
- Week 5: Write up and creation of presentations on work of project, writing recommendations based on our work for creating physically active learning environments and mapping out how this could be distributed in other areas of the school of medicine and further throughout the college.

How to apply:

Expression of interest via email to Dr Amy Bannerman with 300 words about yourself, why you wish to engage with this project and what has motivated you to apply. We may arrange informal interviews at a later stage following the deadline.

Deadline: April 30th 2021

Contact details: In case of any questions please contact Dr Amy Bannerman via email: a.bannerman@imperial.ac.uk