

The BSMA's Scholars Programme



Improving access to medicine for Somali students in the UK

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Entry into medicine is highly competitive across all groups, however, students from underrepresented groups face unique challenges.

Despite widening participation (WP) efforts from universities and other organisations, black students are still 50% less likely to study medicine than white students.

The BSMA's scholars programme utilises teaching seminars, 1-1 mentoring and mock interviews to improve application outcomes for Somali and BAME students aspiring to study medicine in the UK.

"The mentoring was brilliant, it really boosted my confidence going into the interview season. Also the feedback i received was very useful, so much that when I used [the feedback] i received an offer"

Methods:

- 7 students enrolled 8/23 to 4/24
- 8 teaching seminars over Zoom
- Personalised mentoring provided by medical student/doctor volunteers
- Personal statement (PS) reviews
- Online simulated mock MMI with feedback provided
- End-of-programme questionnaire, completed by 6 students

Results:

- 83% (n=6) received one or more offers for medicine
- 83% reported regular contact with their mentor improved their outcomes
- 100% reported that PS feedback improved their essay
- Participants reported an average 52% improvement in their knowledge across all taught topics

Discussion:

The Scholar's programme was effective in improving confidence in specific knowledge areas through our tailored teaching programme, as well as refining personal statements and providing realistic mock interview experiences.

As mentorship was individualised, experiences were varied. It proved difficult to engage all students equally virtually. Considerations for future cycles of the programme should include in-person events, and a provided mentoring framework.

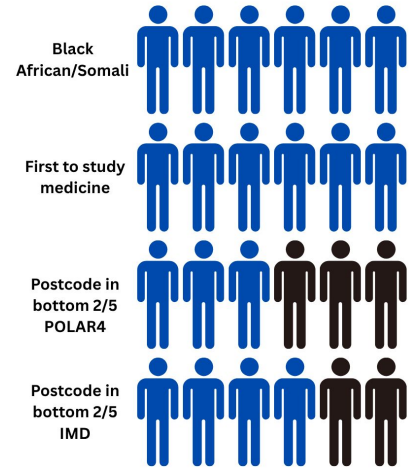


Figure 1: Pictogram depicting the demographic data of participants, n=6

Conclusion:

The BSMA demonstrated that effective WP outreach should identify and target gaps in knowledge as well as provide students with support and a network. Feedback has shown that students benefit from this outreach model, and WP programmes should utilise these methods to improve access to medicine for minoritised groups.