

# Breaking Stigmas, Forging Paths:

A Journey into Psychiatry as an International Medical Graduate in the NHS

In the corridors of Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, I embarked on a transformative journey in psychiatry, one that not only shaped my professional trajectory but propelled a fervent resolve to combat entrenched stigmas surrounding mental health. Guided by the compassionate mentorship of my clinical supervisor, my clinical attachment became the crucible in which my motivation to pursue psychiatry as an international medical graduate (IMG) was nurtured.

## Power of collaboration and compassion

At the heart of my experience lay the multi-disciplinary approach embraced by the early intervention in the psychosis team, a paradigm that went beyond most conventional practices. Community nurses conducting home visits opened my eyes to a level of patient care that transcended the clinical setting compared to my experience so far. Stepping into patients' homes emphasised the significance of understanding individuals within the context of their lives.

In psychiatric care, collaboration stands as a linchpin. Reflecting on the multidisciplinary approach involving psychologists, social workers, nurses, and healthcare professionals crafting treatment plans, and addressing the unique needs of everyone; every case became a mosaic, with each professional contributing a unique piece to the puzzle. Beyond clinical expertise, collaboration extends to the patient's support network, fostering a collective responsibility and a sense of community in the journey to recovery.

## The role of empathy:

Empathy, the pivotal point of psychiatry, transcends borders. Connecting with patients on an emotional level fosters trust and effective communication. Immersing ourselves in their narratives grants profound insights into their fears, experiences, and aspirations. This empathic foundation enables a tailored, compassionate, and patient-centred approach, wielding the power to reshape lives.

## The human side of mental health

Under my clinical supervisor's guidance, I delved into the human side of mental health. Beyond clinical skills, her mentorship

Sukanya Bhattacharya  
*IMG in Psychiatry, Leicester, UK*

Cite as: Bhattacharya, S. (2024)  
Breaking stigmas, forging paths: a journey into psychiatry as an international medical graduate in the NHS. *Sushruta J Health Pol* vol 16; Issue 1: 1-2 DOI 10.38192/16.1.9

Article information  
Submitted Sep23  
Published Mar24

emphasized the significance of active listening, validating experiences, and involving patients in decision-making. Participating in Open Dialogue sessions has been a transformative experience for me. These sessions stress the importance of including the patient's family and social network in the treatment process. By providing a safe space for open and honest communication, we can gain a deeper understanding of the patient's social context and develop a comprehensive treatment plan that encompasses not only the individual but also their support system.

#### Destigmatizing mental health:

As an IMG, my journey is underscored by an unwavering commitment to destigmatizing mental health. Participation in mental health awareness initiatives in Leicester heightened my awareness of diverse cultural dynamics. Initiating open conversations serves as a potent tool to dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, and ignite a global paradigm shift towards compassionate and informed mental health care. During one such event during mental health awareness week at a Gurudwara in Leicester, I encountered S, a courageous individual grappling with anorexia nervosa and OCD. Her resilience was evident as she shared her journey, accompanied by a poignant short film detailing her struggle with suicidal thoughts and her ongoing fight for recovery.

#### Inspiration from my clinical supervisor

My clinical supervisor's mentorship has been a guiding star in my transformative journey. Her commitment to compassionate, patient-centred care goes beyond clinical boundaries. Quoting her wisdom, "Psychiatric care is about understanding the person behind the diagnosis," encapsulates the ethos that fuels my motivation to pursue psychiatry and challenges the pervasive stigmas surrounding mental health. Under her guidance, I was not just an observer; I was an active participant in the narrative of patient care.

#### Conclusion

My journey into psychiatry as an IMG has been a profound exploration, characterized by collaboration, empathy, and a commitment to destigmatizing mental health. My supervisor's mentorship has been pivotal in shaping my understanding and motivating me to actively challenge the stigma against mental health. As an IMG, armed with the insights gained from my clinical attachment, I am poised to be an advocate for change. Through community engagement, awareness initiatives, and patient-centred care, I aspire to be a part of the global movement towards breaking stigmas and forging paths that lead to compassionate and inclusive mental health care for all.