

046 SURVEY OF UK MEDICAL STUDENTS ON THE PERCEPTION OF NEUROLOGY

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Objective Medical students perceive neurology as a difficult subject, a phenomenon described as “neurophobia”. Studies investigating student attitudes towards neurology have been limited by small sample sizes within individual medical schools. We aimed to conduct the first national survey of the perception of neurology among medical students.

Methods A 24 question online survey was designed and distributed in the form of a web-link to all UK medical schools. Responses were collected for 10 weeks with reminders sent at 3 and 6 weeks. A £300 prize-draw was offered upon completion of the survey.

Results 2877 medical students from 25/31 medical schools responded. Students found neurology to be significantly more difficult than other specialties (both before and after a clinical neurology placement) and were least comfortable drawing up a neurological differential diagnosis compared to other specialties ($p < 0.0001$ for neurology vs. each of the other specialties). Neuroanatomy was regarded as the most important factor contributing to neurology being perceived as difficult.

Conclusions The perception of neurology remains unchanged, in contrast to the rapidly changing demands of neurological care in an ageing population. Neurological skills are necessary in any medical specialty, thus combatting “neurophobia” in medical students is essential.