

# Disruption and Medical Careers: What can we learn from Doctors' Obituaries?

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## INTRODUCTION

Doctors face disruptions of various sorts in their lives, which may not always be apparent. Obituaries are perhaps an unusual source of information, yet reading these can provide insights into disruptions and subsequent career. Here, a random selection of obituaries was examined to assess what disruptions doctors have faced in their lifetimes and their implications.

## METHOD

A selection of obituaries (n=12) were examined between August 2018 and August 2020 from the 'BJPsych Bulletin', a journal published by the UK Royal College of Psychiatrists. These were assessed for inclusion of three types of disruption: living, working or training in more than one country, undertaking military service or obtaining additional, non-compulsory qualifications.

## FINDINGS

Twelve obituaries were identified, all for male psychiatrists, four academics (professors) and the rest clinicians. The ages of death ranged between 70 and 96; eight had lived, worked or trained in more than one country, 2 had undertaken army service and 2 had obtained additional, non-compulsory qualifications. All academic doctors had obtained additional qualifications versus 6 of the clinicians. One doctor (a professor) had experienced all 3 types of disruption, 4 had experienced 2 types of disruption, 5 had experienced 1 type of disruption and 2 doctors had not experienced any disruptions. Of note, 2 doctors with zero disruptions died at the earliest ages (70 and 72), and the oldest doctors (95 and 96) each had 2 disruptions.

## CONCLUSIONS

This work has shown that disruptions may well have contributed positively to the success of the doctors honoured with obituaries recognising their contributions. While the research has limitations, it does suggest positive associations, and further research in this area is warranted. It is possible that such certain disruptions may well be desirable and important, especially living, working and training in other countries and the obtaining of additional, non-mandatory qualifications.