

Letters

Should we be promoting 5 Steps to Wellbeing in all clinical environments?

Dear Editor,

Emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing are all components of mental health which alters our thinking, feeling, and behaviour, as well as influencing how we deal with stress, interact with others, and make healthy choices. Many people in the UK suffer from low levels of mental wellbeing. In the *Quality of Life in the UK* report published by the Office for National Statistics in May 2023¹, the proportion of adults reporting elevated degrees of life fulfilment had declined to 23.3% in the most recent quarter (October to December 2022) compared with 25.2% in the same quarter the previous year. In the same time period, adults reporting higher levels of feeling things they do in life are worthwhile (32.1%), happiness (29.4%) and low levels of anxiety (33.8%) had stayed broadly similar.

A portion of your readers will have heard about the 5 Steps (or Ways) to Wellbeing, which are a collection of evidence-based public mental health messages developed by the New Economics Foundation to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of the general population.² They consist of the following:³

Be active: Take a walk or run, cycle, play a game or dance. Find a physical activity that you enjoy doing first and foremost; one that meets your fitness and mobility needs.

Take notice: Pay attention by stopping, pausing, or looking around. What might you at any point see, feel, smell or even taste? Search for pleasant, new, surprising or uncommon things in your day-to-day existence and contemplate how that affects you.

Connect: Build close associations with individuals in your day-to-day existence: neighbours, co-workers, and friends at home, at work, at school, or in your local community. Consider these connections the foundations of your life and invest energy creating them. Every day, you'll benefit from and grow from these links.

Give: Do something kind for a friend or stranger, smile, say thank you, give your time, or think about joining a community group. This will also help you connect with the people in your immediate environment.

Keep learning: Don't be afraid to try something new, rekindle an old pastime, or enrol in a course to keep learning. Figure out how to play an instrument or how to prepare your favourite food. Learning new things will boost your confidence, as well as being an enjoyable thing in itself.

As part of the development of clinical pathways at the

Health Board I work for in Wales, we are recommending that clinicians in primary and secondary care promote mental wellbeing and help foster the mental health resilience of their patients, thereby increasing the likelihood that other healthy lifestyle changes are made and maintained. Part of this role will involve publicising the 5 Steps to Wellbeing. Should this be something that all clinicians in the UK and elsewhere do (time allowing)? Yes, I definitely think so.

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Planetary Health Report Card for Queen's University Belfast – update

Planetary Health is a transdisciplinary field that addresses both the impact of human activity on the health of our planet, and the growing impact of climate and ecological breakdown on human health. Both locally and globally, climate change influences environmental and socioeconomic drivers of health; by impacting food supply, water, air quality, housing, infectious disease distribution, poverty, and migration it is changing the landscape of human health.

In 2020/21, a group of medical students completed the first Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC) at QUB.¹ This international initiative audits the sustainability and Planetary Health aligned practices of more than 100 medical schools across 12 countries. This is done through completion of an annual report card, assessing 32 metrics across 5 domains (listed in Figure 1), and allocating an overall score to each institution.

The PHRC group at Queen's has been active for three years, completing three report cards, and wish to highlight the success achieved in collaboration with both academic and non-academic staff at the university.

Over the three years, QUB has improved from 7th to 4th out of 25 UK medical schools completing the report card. As illustrated in Figure 2, the overall score of the University has



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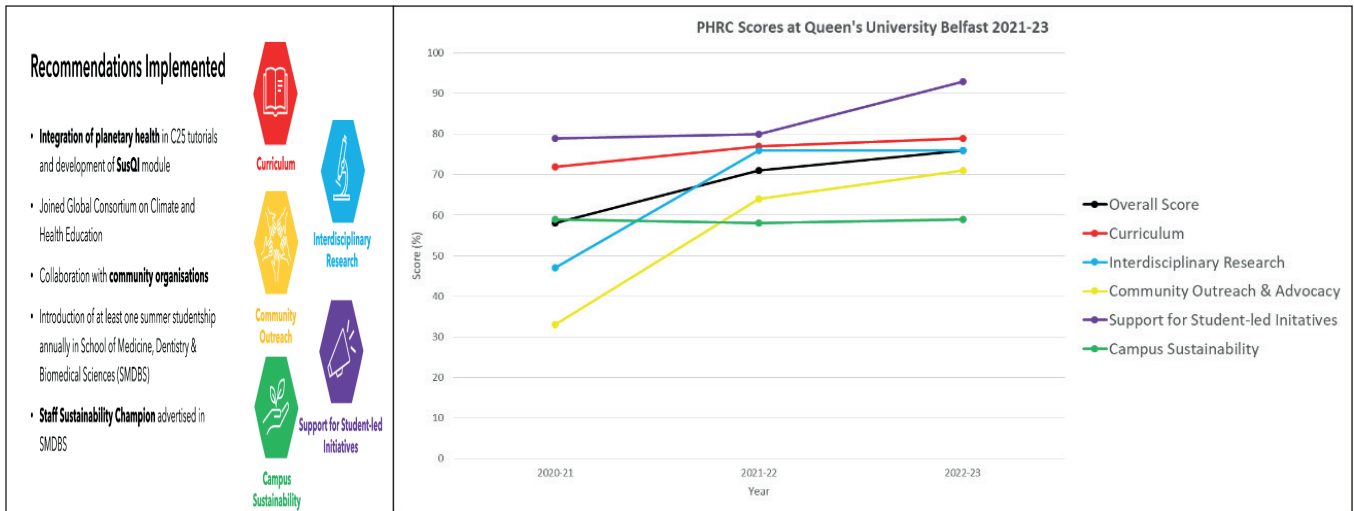


Figure 1. PHRC domains

Figure 2 PHRC Overall, and per domain, scores 2020-21 to 2022-23

increased from 60% to 76%. Interestingly, this phenomenon is repeated at many of the other institutions which complete the report card: 78% of institutions completing a report card for at least the second time improved their score from one year to the next.

This statistic highlights the key power of the report card. It is not simply an appraisal of current practice to yield a static document. The report card generates change by highlighting good practice, making recommendations for the following year, and fostering a collaborative approach between students and staff – both academic and non-academic.

In collating the information for each year's PHRC, we have established relationships with a wide range of stakeholders across the University: from climate activist groups in the Students' Union, students in other healthcare courses, staff in the University Estates directorate, and senior faculty within the School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences (SMDBS). It is these collaborative partnerships that have been so crucial to implementing report card recommendations.

The most salient example of this collaborative approach has been the establishment of the Sustainable Healthcare Development Group. An organised forum for the PHRC student team to meet with senior staff within the School of Medicine, and Estates Directorate. Many, if not all, of the successes in implementing PHRC recommendations have originated from and/or been discussed by this group.

Some of the achievements from the implementation of PHRC recommendations across the five PHRC domains are listed below:

Curriculum:

Metrics in this domain have improved year-on-year as the Medical School continues to roll out its C25 curriculum, with "Global and Population Health" being one of four central themes. The Sustainable Healthcare Development

Group have been involved in:

Supporting the development of new Planetary Health learning outcomes in the C25 Curriculum, in particular, through the SUSQI module for final years, and working on the inclusion of Planetary Health in the 'Medics in Primary Schools' Student Selected Component.

Providing Carbon Literacy Training for all Year 2 students.

Supporting in mapping UN Sustainable Development Goals to the curricula of both undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses.

Last year's PHRC lead at Queen's, Victoria England, is currently Regional Lead for the PHRC in the UK, and part of a delegation of students which met with the GMC to discuss the inclusion of Planetary Health in the next 'Outcomes for Graduates' and as curricula for future UK-wide Medical Licensing Assessments (MLA).

Community Outreach:

In addition to the number of community outreach events which take place across the University, the PHRC group has taken an active role in organising events with a Planetary Health focus. This includes hosting an event entitled "Climate Emergency Department" in the medical school, as part of the NI Science Festival in February 2023, focused on the effects of climate change on healthcare. This event took the form of interactive roleplay scenarios and was aimed at children and young adults who could attend for free. This project led to the PHRC group winning an award for "Outstanding Contribution to the Community" at this year's QUB Student's Union Awards.

Additionally, outreach within our own community of students, clinicians and academics has been an important aim. We have taken opportunities to facilitate discussion on Planetary Health and the need for its inclusion in the education of future healthcare professionals at several academic events

and conferences, including NICON, SHARE conference (Brighton & Sussex Medical School), INHED conference, Healthy Planet Healthy People, the QUB Annual Education Day. We also produced a blog as part of the University's Net Zero campaign.

Campus sustainability:

Campus sustainability remains the most challenging domain of the report card to implement recommendations, as illustrated in Figure 2, there has been little improvement in the score for this domain over the three successive report cards. Queen's already follows a number of important practices, such as composting food waste and retrofitting buildings to be more energy efficient. However, many of the metrics here rely on significant changes in university practice such as shifting to sourcing renewable energy, full divestment from fossil fuels and changes in waste management. We welcome the commitment to Net-Zero in the "Sustainability Action Plan", and also acknowledge that many potential changes fall outside of the remit of SMDBS. We look forward to the University-wide changes to come as a result of the new Net-Zero strategies.

Support for student Led initiatives:

Queen's is generally very supportive of student-led initiatives, and the number of these specific to, or inclusive of, Planetary Health are growing year-on-year. There are fewer opportunities available directly through the medical school, and we look forward to working with Queen's to improve these, including Summer Studentship opportunities. As a group, we held an event to coincide with the COP26 conference in Glasgow, which aimed to make Planetary Health more accessible for healthcare students, and to encourage students to act against climate change. We also submitted a number of applications to Queen's Green Fund, and as a result, Sustainable Cooking Classes have been held in QUB Elms accommodation, and discussions are ongoing to introduce food waste bins in libraries.

Interdisciplinary research:

There are a large number of Planetary Health aligned research streams at QUB, including work ongoing in the Centre for Public Health, Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action (SECA), the School of Biological Sciences and the School of Natural and Built Environment.

The QUB School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences continues to be part of the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education,² and has signed Health Declares: Climate Ecological Emergency³, following recommendations of previous PHRC reports.

From a student perspective, one of the most exciting interdisciplinary developments is the ongoing discussions with staff and students in the schools of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Dentistry about PHRCs for their respective courses and

the potential for further multidisciplinary collaboration that this brings. We also hope to team up with healthcare students from Ulster University, including from the new postgraduate Medicine course, to form a multidisciplinary Northern Irish group of students passionate about Planetary Health.

Climate breakdown is the biggest threat to human health in the 21st century⁴. Therefore, it is essential that healthcare students enter the workforce equipped with an understanding of the changing nature of the world they will work in and the ways in which they can shape their practice to meet changing global healthcare needs. The PHRC has proved to be valuable tool for facilitating collaboration, stimulating discussion, and driving change to make our university environment, our curriculum and, hopefully in time, our future medical workforce more Planetary Health conscious.

The report card for 2022/23 is available at: https://phreportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Queen_s-University-Belfast-PHRC-2021-22-1.pdf

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