

What Do The Hidden Half Think?

Post-Appraisal Feedback from those who didn't initially respond in Appraisal Year 2020-2021

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic has pushed the NHS to capacity. At the centre of this national effort has been the staff.

Appraisal offers a supportive conversation with a peer to discuss aspects of a doctor's practice, explore personal development, broaden portfolios, and define career aspirations. A key focus shifted towards supporting the GP's wellbeing, recognising that this is core to providing best practice and improving patient safety.

Afterwards, the appraisee is always sent a post-appraisal feedback survey which aids review of appraisal, enhances and improves the process.

Post-event feedback is used in a wide variety of industries but when it is not compulsory, not everyone responds. Our usual response rate in Wessex is around 63%, however in 2020 the response was significantly lower at just 50%.

The aim of this study was to gather feedback about Medical Appraisal 2020 **but importantly see if non-responders give different feedback to the initial responders**. There is considerable reason to be interested in what the hidden half think and whether their feedback differs from the immediate responders.

This study was also an opportunity to explore the reasons why some doctors do not respond to questionnaires.

METHODS

- Dorset GPs were selected (Appraisal Year 2020 – 2021) as the study cohort from the Wessex patch because they had the least disruption in their appraisal delivery during the COVID pandemic. These GPs were contacted by email, text and phone call.

- The initial questionnaire was sent to 341 GPs
- 170 responded promptly following their appraisal
- 171 were non-responders – **our project cohort**
- 101 of this 171 responded after being contacted through this project
- The original post-appraisal feedback questionnaire was sent with 3 additional questions exploring reasons behind their non-response to the original invitation:

Q1 What was your main reason for not answering the survey when it was previously sent?

Q2 Do you normally respond to your appraisal feedback surveys?

Q3 We are looking at how this questionnaire is delivered. In the future, how might you prefer to receive your feedback questionnaire?



DISCUSSION

It is generally assumed that it is reasonable to look at feedback response rates as low as 20% because those who most wish to give feedback and have something to say will do so and everyone else is assumed to have less to say because they feel more neutral...

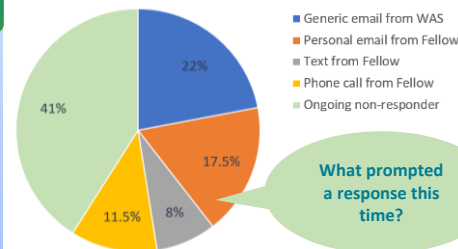
...but this study found that it is not always true because they have less to say but could be because the original survey did not reach them in an accessible way. Our findings do suggest that the hidden half are more neutral in their feedback. Perhaps if they felt more strongly, they may look for a means to give feedback more proactively.

The number of responses received will depend on having up-to-date contact information. Individuals may choose not to respond for a variety of reasons and this should be respected.

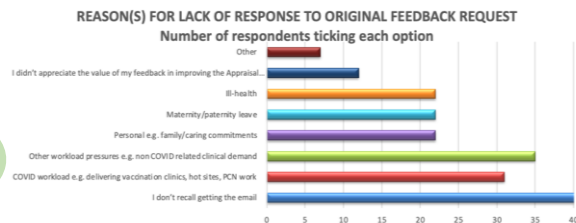
Further research is required to ascertain if the difference in results between our cohort and those who responded initially is significant. There may be true differences in views about appraisal between these doctors. However, there are also a number of potential confounding factors, eg, inaccurate recall (as appraisal for most of our respondents was several months earlier) or respondents feeling pressurised to respond, which might skew their perspective.

RESULTS

22% replied following a further generic email, 17.5% responded after personalised GP Fellow email, 8% responded following a text & 11.5% responded following a GP fellow telephone call. **41% remained as non responders**



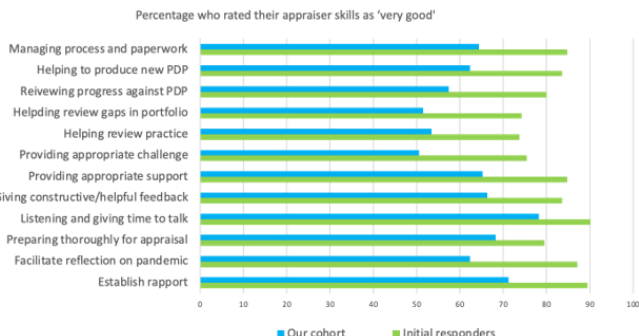
Q1: Reasons given for a lack of response at the original time of asking



Q2: Do you normally respond to your appraisal feedback surveys? 62% stated that they normally complete post-appraisal feedback questionnaires

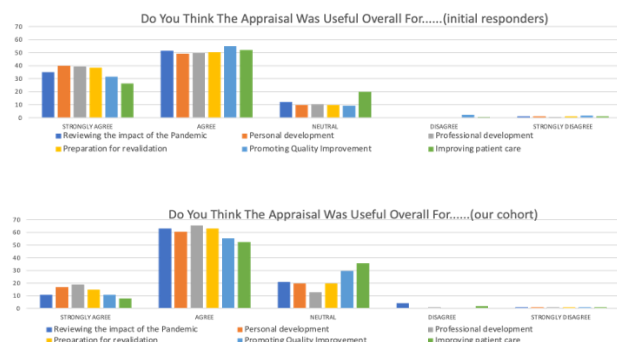
In relation to our cohort's responses to the original questionnaire, the following observations were made:

What did our respondents think of their appraisers? Does it differ from those who responded initially?



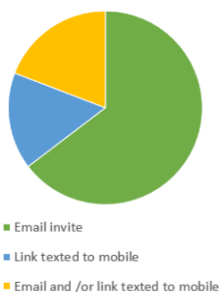
- Overall dissatisfaction is higher and positivity lower in the study cohort in relation to their appraisal when compared to initial responders but overall levels of dissatisfaction remained low.

Did our respondents think appraisal was useful overall? Does it differ from those who responded initially?



- Most of the cohort still 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that appraisal supported personal & professional development, quality improvement, improving patient care and preparation for revalidation. However, neutrality is higher and extreme positivity is lower in our cohort.

Q3 We are looking at how this questionnaire is delivered. In the future, how might you prefer to receive your feedback questionnaire?



CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ Correct contact details facilitates the use of data for both administrative and permitted research purposes.
- ✓ Sending out a reminder email to obtain feedback may increase response rates (in our study, by almost 40%)
- ✓ Our results suggest quite strongly that those who do not respond tend to give more neutral feedback but that they do not give feedback that invalidates or undermines what has been learned from the first responders; they just seem to feel less strongly about the questions on the whole.
- ✓ Our findings have wide-reaching implications in the search for feedback as organisations across industry look to drive improvements in practice.
- ✓ This project has enabled the leadership Fellows to experience how a piece of work can implement effective change.