

## A Survey Exploring UK Medical Student Experiences of Pre-Hospital Emergency Medicine

Dr Cerys Hickinbottom<sup>1</sup>, Dr Sophie Riley<sup>2</sup>, Dr Yvonne O'Neill<sup>3</sup>, Dr Jake Kilmartin<sup>4</sup>, Dr Pam Hardy<sup>5</sup>

1. University Hospital Wales 2. Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust 3. Ysbyty Gwynedd 4. University Hospitals Birmingham 5. Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

### »» BACKGROUND

**PRE-HOSPITAL EMERGENCY MEDICINE [PHEM]** is a sub-specialty of **anaesthesia, emergency medicine** and **intensive care medicine**.

The GMC recognised PHEM as a sub-specialty in July **2011**. Subsequently, PHEM has rapidly evolved, becoming integral to patient care across the UK.<sup>1</sup>

A recent study demonstrated **under-representation of women in UK helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS)** [20% of doctors and 24% of paramedics].<sup>2</sup> Understanding medical student's perspective and attitudes towards PHEM is vital to foster interest and address any real or perceived barriers in PHEM.

### »» METHODS



This study explored current **UK medical student perspectives, motivations, and perceived barriers** relating to PHEM as a career. An **anonymous online survey** was disseminated by the **Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care Student and Trainee Group** via social media and contact with university societies. The survey explored **exposure to PHEM, motivational and deterrent factors, and gender-specific perceptions**.

### »» RESULTS

**SURVEY: 92** responses

Encompassing **22 medical schools** covering every region within the UK. The majority of respondents were aged **17-24** and **98%** had heard of **PHEM**, with **66%** expressing interest in pursuing it within their career.



**PHEM exposure as a medical student:**

lectures [49%], simulation [45%], Community First Responder schemes [37%] and observer shifts [28%]

**KEY MOTIVATORS** for considering a **career in PHEM** were defined as those rated important or extremely important. These included:

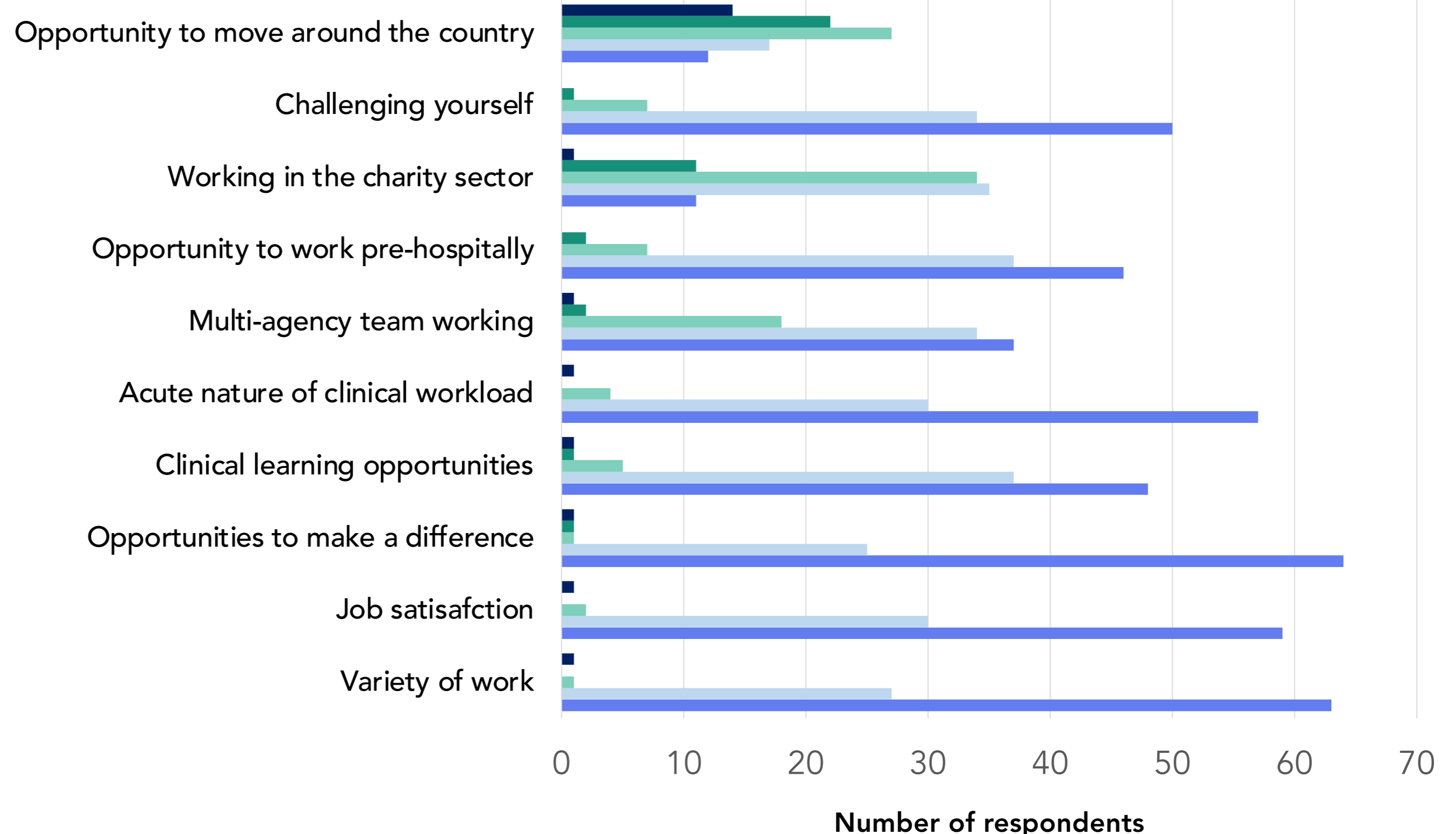
- **Variety of work** [98%]
- **Job satisfaction** [97%]
- **Making a difference** [97%]



**GENDER-SPECIFIC PERCEPTIONS:**

**82%** believed women face additional challenges, primarily due to **gender stereotypes** [62%], **lack of role models** [46%], and **work-life balance** [43%]. More women than men cited strain on **family and personal life** as a deterrent [83% vs. 62%], while more men compared to women highlighted **difficulty gaining exposure** [73% vs. 58%]

#### A CAREER IN PHEM: MOTIVATING FACTORS



■ Very unimportant ■ Unimportant ■ Neither important nor unimportant ■ Important ■ Extremely important

**BARRIERS TO PURSUING**

**A CAREER IN PHEM** were identified by 79%, including: **Limited exposure** [66%], **logistical challenges** [49%], and **lack of information** [37%]

**DETERRENTS** identified were strain on **family and**

**personal life** [73%] and **perceived difficulty accessing relevant experience** [65%]. Free text comments frequently mentioned **low availability of jobs** and **subsequent high competition ratios**, with additional references to mentorship and mental health.

### »» CONCLUSION

**Strong interest in PHEM** persists among UK medical students despite concerns around **limited exposure** and **work-life balance**. Continuing to address **accessibility and gender equity** by using strategies such as **mentorship programs and exposure to role models** will attract a broader range of talent and help support the development of a diverse **PHEM workforce** that is representative of the community it serves.

#### REFERENCES:

1. General Medical Council. Pre-hospital emergency medicine curriculum [Internet] 2022. Available from: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/curricula/pre-hospital-emergency-medicine-curriculum>
2. Thomas-Mourne J. Exploring the gender gap in UK helicopter emergency medical services. Journal of Paramedic Practice. [Internet] 2024. [cited 2025 October 25]; 16(11). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.12968/jpar.2024.003>

Contact details: [sophie.riley@doctors.org.uk](mailto:sophie.riley@doctors.org.uk)



FACULTY OF  
PRE-HOSPITAL  
CARE