

It's Only Money, Isn't It?

Impact of Pay Discrepancies on Anaesthetist in Training Wellbeing

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Background

Since the introduction of the 2016 Junior Doctors Contract, calculation of pay for junior doctors has become more complex, involving a range of supplements and allowances¹. For many Anaesthetists in Training (AiTs), rotational training and changes to work schedules means that their pay is frequently recalculated, providing opportunities for error that can lead to pay discrepancies.

Anecdotally we were aware of several AiTs who had experienced pay discrepancies, including ourselves. We were keen to explore whether pay discrepancies are a widespread issue within our region, which uses a Lead Employer model, and the impact such pay issues were having on our wellbeing.

Method

We invited all AiTs within our region to complete a brief online survey, regardless of whether a pay discrepancy had been experienced at any time during training. As well as demographic data, for those who reported experiencing a pay discrepancy we asked about the nature of the pay issue and the impact it had on the responder's wellbeing.

Results & Discussion: Extent and nature of pay discrepancies

41.5% (85) of invited AiTs completed the survey, of whom 80% (68) had experienced at least one pay discrepancy during their training, with 25% (17) having a pay discrepancy on 5 or more separate occasions. 84% (57) had been underpaid, 19% (13) overpaid and 13% (9) did not receive pay on the correct date.

Pay discrepancies affected both full time and less-than-full-time (LTFT) employed AiTs (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Training proportion when a pay discrepancy occurred.

Whilst in full time training	Whilst in less than full time (LTFT) training	Whilst in full time & LTFT training (>1 episode)
36 (53%)	21 (31%)	11 (16%)

As expected, AiTs coming to the end of their training were more likely to have experienced a pay discrepancy. Amongst ST7+ respondents, 88% (15/17) had experienced one or more discrepancies. Even if all non-responding ST7+ anaesthetists in training had not experienced any pay discrepancies during their training, this would mean that more than two thirds (68% (15/22)) had been paid incorrectly during their training.

48% of CT2 respondents reported a pay discrepancy, reflecting 35% of their training cohort (15/31), which demonstrates pay discrepancies are still a current issue for AiTs.

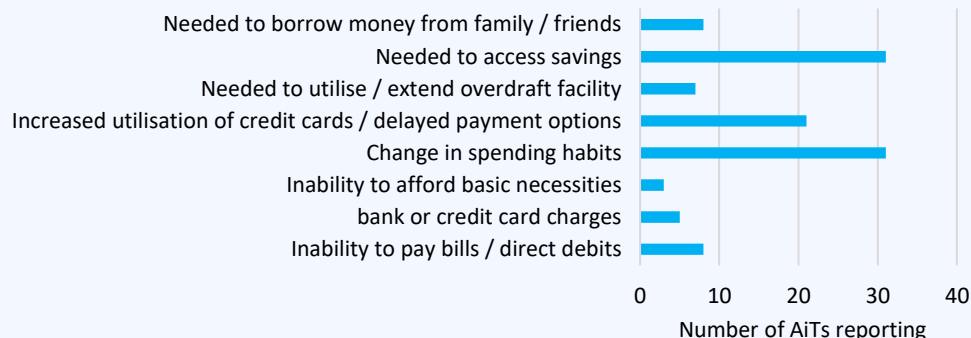
Results & Discussion: Financial consequences of pay discrepancies

Two thirds (46/68) of those who experienced pay discrepancies reported financial sequelae.

Amongst those experiencing financial implications, the most commonly reported consequences were a change in spending habits, needing to access savings and increased utilisation of credit cards or delayed payment options.

Worryingly, 12% (8) reported that they were unable to pay bills or direct debits and 4% (3) reported that they found themselves unable to afford basic necessities (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Financial consequences reported by anaesthetists in training (AiTs) who had experienced one or more pay discrepancies during training.



Results & Discussion: Impact of pay discrepancies on wellbeing

Most of those reporting pay discrepancies reported a negative impact on one or more areas of their wellbeing. Respondents were asked to grade the severity of the negative impact on a number of different domains of their wellbeing (*Figures 2 & 3*). The areas most impacted amongst AiTs experiencing pay discrepancies were anxiety and worry (91%), stress levels (68%), job satisfaction (78%) and resilience (63%).

Alarming, 8 respondents (12%) reported that their pay discrepancy had had an extremely negative impact on two or more of the wellbeing domains assessed, with all 8 reporting an extremely negative impact on both their anxiety and worry and their job satisfaction.

Figure 2: Self-reported assessment of impact of pay discrepancies on personal wellbeing domains of anaesthetists in training (AiTs)

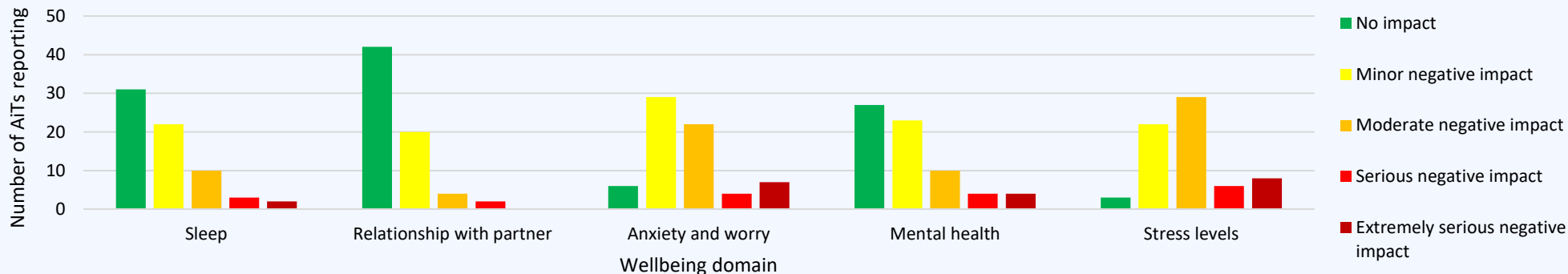
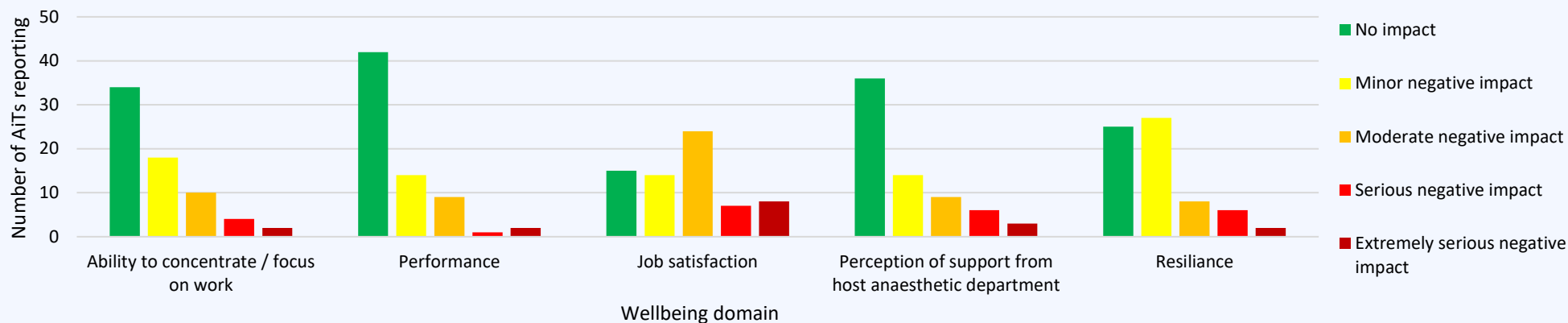


Figure 3: Self-reported assessment of impact of pay discrepancies on professional wellbeing domains of anaesthetists in training (AiTs)



Conclusions

Our survey has shown that pay discrepancies are common amongst AiTs in our region, affecting both those working full time and those working less-than-full time.

We believe that this is not an issue isolated to our region or specialty; a pay review of those training in the London School of Paediatrics found 935 doctors had been paid incorrectly, the most significant error being a £20,836 underpayment². Whilst we did not ask the value of the pay discrepancy in our survey, we have shown that there have been significant financial consequences for some AiTs.

Experiencing a pay discrepancy had a negative impact on wellbeing for the majority. Nationally, the risk of burnout amongst AiTs continues to rise³, making AiT wellbeing an ever-increasing priority to protect the future anaesthetic workforce. We hope that increasing awareness of the impact pay discrepancies have on AiT wellbeing will encourage support for those AiTs affected and lead to strategies for prompt resolution, lessening the harm caused to wellbeing.

References

1. NHS Employers. Terms and Conditions of Service for NHS Doctors and Dentists in Training (England) 2016. Available from <https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/doctors-and-dentists-training-terms-and-conditions-england-2016>
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3. General Medical Council. National Training Survey 2023 Results. Available from https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/national-training-survey-2023-initial-findings-report_pdf-101939815.pdf