

# **ROYAL MEDICAL BENEVOLENT FUND - RESEARCH INTO UNMET NEED**

## **1. The Royal Medical Benevolent Fund**

The RMBF is the UK's leading charity helping doctors, medical students and their families at times of crisis.

The Objects of the charity are:

To prevent or relieve poverty and to relieve need arising from youth, age, ill health, disability and bereavement among people who are doctors or who have worked as doctors, and medical students and the dependants of such individuals.

## **2. Hypotheses**

Based on our experience, we believe that:

1. There is an (unknown) level of unmet need amongst our potential beneficiary group.
2. There are factors as yet unknown to us which are preventing eligible doctors, medical students and families from approaching us.
3. Given our knowledge of the extent of difficulty and stage of illness/need at the time of application to us we believe that we could enable better outcomes if potential beneficiaries approached us before they are in crisis.

## **3. Research Proposal**

The RMBF is looking to commission a high quality research project to identify the extent of unmet need in medical practitioners, medical students and families who are in financial difficulty as a result of ill health, disability or bereavement.

We would expect the research to cover a diverse population of the profession sampling our target beneficiaries across multiple areas including age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, specialty, time from qualification and grades.

We would also expect applicants and beneficiaries of the charity to be interviewed by agreement as part of the research.

In addition to identifying the extent of unmet need, we would expect the researchers to identify organisational strategies for the RMBF to help us reach those potential beneficiaries who are not engaging with the charity and at the earliest opportunity.

#### 4. Key Questions

The key questions we would want the research to address include:

1. Are there doctors, medical students and families with health and financial problems that would fulfil RMBF criteria for support, but do not approach the charity?
2. If so, what is the scale of the unmet need?
3. What are the factors that inhibit/prevent potential beneficiaries coming forward?
4. How might we overcome these factors?
5. How well known is the RMBF in medical schools and the profession more widely? Do people know what help the RMBF can offer?
6. How do the demographics of unmet need compare with those of current beneficiaries?
7. Are there geographic differences in the UK in doctors' willingness to approach the RMBF?
8. Are we reaching a suitably diverse client group?
9. How could we reach potential beneficiaries earlier?
10. Is the charity appropriate for the profession in the 21st century – is there evidence that our objectives are not meeting current needs?
11. From the findings of the research and given our charitable purpose, what suggestions would you make to the Trustees in helping them to develop the charity?

Examples might include:

- Should we be reviewing/extending our criteria for support?
- Are there additional services we could be providing that would help us to fulfil our charitable purpose?
- Could we be doing more to draw attention to the causes of stress, anxiety, depression and burnout in doctors and medical students?
- Are there ways we could inspire and initiate change to improve the wider picture of good health and wellbeing in the profession?

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