

Neurologists and psychiatrists need to learn and train together

[Is shared learning the way to bring UK neurology and psychiatry closer? What teachers, trainers, and trainees think

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Neurology and psychiatry are currently taught separately in the UK. But rapid advances in basic brain science, which underpin both specialties are increasingly blurring the boundaries between diseases of the mind and those of the brain. However, neurology is primarily practised in hospitals, while psychiatry tends to be community based, making it difficult to see how the two could be more effectively integrated, other than through education and training.

A survey of undergraduate teachers, postgraduate trainers, and junior doctors of both disciplines revealed considerable enthusiasm for shared learning. But although neurologists were keen, they were somewhat less convinced than the psychiatrists. The research authors think that neurologists stand to gain from a greater understanding of community based care as well as medically undiagnosed symptoms, which as many as a third of neurological outpatients have. Psychiatrists could also extend their expertise of the diagnosis, investigation and treatment of patients with relevant brain disorders. They recommend that every medical school should link the teaching of basic neuroscience, psychiatry, neurology and psychology.