

Dr Sasha Darwazeh

Trailblazer Fellow – Leaders in Deprivation **(Health Education England)**

Introduction

I was accepted onto the Trailblazer fellowship in October 2021, a time when the covid pandemic was still affecting services and most encounters have been, as a result, virtual.

I had large, influential shoes to fill, following the pioneering cohort for Coventry and Warwickshire. Dr Catherine Tart and Dr Maisun Elftise are two influential women who took on an innovative role at the height of the pandemic and their journey and outcomes have been powerful to see. I have been incredibly grateful for their guidance and support, and I hope to do the same for the cohort that follow on. It is important we pass on knowledge gained if we are to reduce health inequalities in the future. As Margaret Fuller once said, “In the event that you have information, give others a chance to light their candles in it”.

Activity

During the year I have networked with various leaders within the health and social care system and developed the confidence to reach out to them and work collaboratively.

I have linked in with Trailblazers across the country, forged new friendships and gained the confidence to generate new professional relationships. I believe we can all learn from each other and that our different values and personalities can create a wider knowledge base.

I have initiated personal projects; focusing mainly on cervical smear uptake, creating new AccuRx templates to send to non-responders as well as speaking to patients individually in a bid to improve rates.

I took up the role as Cancer lead for the practice and am looking at data and partaking in audits so we can see where things can be improved across all screening and initial encounters. I have taken a great interest in utilising social media to provide education regarding the importance of screening.

I have also changed the way that I prescribe, and I am having consultations with patients about reducing opiate prescribing where appropriate. Without the time to educate myself on this skill, I would not have had the confidence to do this.

Additionally, I offer the most vulnerable patients 20-minute consultations. These include patients seeking asylum, drug users, those without housing, those suffering from domestic abuse to name a few. These can be booked face to face with me, and we discuss all aspects of their physical, social and mental health. I signpost them to our incredible social prescribing team and MIND workers if appropriate, and those who I feel need additional support I can discuss at our monthly Go West multidisciplinary meeting. I am a GP representative in this MDT, which has been selected as a finalist for the Innovate awards 2022 in the “innovative health system of the year” category. It has been vastly educational and insightful. So many projects and support services come and go due to funding, and this MDT helps us all to navigate the system and makes us aware of what is available for our patients. Patients have been incredibly grateful for the extra time and care offered to them.

I partake in a monthly Coventry and Warwickshire aspiring leader's forum. This gave me the opportunity to chair a meeting and has been an incredibly validating and supportive forum. Hearing what my colleagues are doing in terms of innovation has been enlightening and I feel Coventry and Warwickshire are extremely fortunate to have these amazing leaders of the future.

I was also involved in the organisation of the Health and Wellbeing Event in Coventry which was a great success. This was an event focused on offering the Muslim population of Coventry and Warwickshire a health screening check and to help them understand how to access services i.e cancer screening, how to prevent long term health conditions i.e diabetes and how to prepare for a healthy holy month of Ramadan.

I also presented at the Midlands wide health inequalities conference – Moving the Margins. This was hosted by the RCGP and was a virtual conference where I and Dr Colette Hancock hosted a workshop about The Trailblazer fellowship and health inequalities. It was an honour to be asked by the founder of the Trailblazer scheme, Dr Rachel Steen to present this.

I have also led teaching for the Coventry and Warwickshire VTS, speaking about Health Inequalities, and hopefully reassuring ST3s that working as a GP in areas of deprivation isn't a job role to be feared, but one to be excited about, and where one can really make a difference to people's lives.

Most recently, I have been put forward by the PCN lead to be Health inequalities lead for the PCN. A role I am extremely excited to have and will hopefully allow me to elicit change within the locality and perhaps, in the wider population.

Involvement in these projects and meeting with local community groups has also led me to develop a better understanding of my locality and the issues they face. I am much more aware of the resources that are available for my patients, and I can now confidently signpost to these.

CPD

The funding from the fellowship has allowed me to attend a course in Personal Impact and Influence. I have, since entering medical school, suffered from imposter syndrome. Being young, female and mixed race, I did not feel I fit the mould of a medic - which is largely portrayed in the media as middle class, white and male. I've come to see since that this is a changing concept and by attending this course, I have challenged my own self-deprecating beliefs regarding imposter syndrome and am starting to acknowledge that I have worked hard to get to where I am. I was able to have honest feedback about how I come across and I have enhanced my ability to lead and influence others with more confidence.

I have been lucky enough to receive teaching virtually from the Trailblazer programme as well as having the time to access a great resource called "FairHealth", to further educate myself, and in turn, my colleagues and peers, in the subject of health inequalities.

I have become more educated in:

- Medically Unexplained Symptoms
- Chronic Pain
- Migrant health and had an incredibly inspiring presentation by The Red Cross
- Sustainability and Greener practice

I have also met virtually and face to face with some amazing organisations across Coventry and Warwickshire:

- Coventry Resource centre for the blind

- Canley food bank
- Sky Blues in the Community
- Emmaus- charity offering support to formerly homeless people and those at risk of homelessness
- St Oswald's Church in Jardine Crescent
- Coventry Refugee and Migrant centre
- Meridien Practice- GP services for asylum seekers and refugees in Coventry
- Wava Hall- a Creative, Cultural and Business Centre that provide incubation & acceleration support to budding creative talent
- Violence Reduction team
- Deedmore Christian Centre- an incredible example of how having a central hub for advice, education and support in a area where money is tight, can bring a community together

Summary

The Fellowship has been an integral steppingstone in my path to the future. It has provided me with the skills to present confidently, I have found an area of medicine in which I feel passionately about, I have gained an additional role and it has rekindled my love for General practice.

Thanks to the knowledge I have gained in Health Inequalities, the patients I used to fear to consult with, are now my favourite encounters.

It can be easy to read media vitriol, get sucked into negative medic views regarding the future of the NHS, but this can all lead to job dissatisfaction and ultimately burnout. The Trailblazer fellowship is a great way to encourage and support GPs to work in areas of social deprivation and not flock to areas of affluence for an "easy" life. It doesn't have to be that way, we can create change, we must educate ourselves and then others and be leaders of change as the next generation of GPs.

So, thank you to the C&W Training hub and the Trailblazer fellowship for this opportunity, it has been an incredible year.