PREVALENCE AND BURDEN OF DISORDERS OF GUT-BRAIN INTERACTION AMONGST UK MEDICAL STUDENTS

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A cross-sectional survey of 378 UK medical students found that 76% met Rome IV diagnostic criteria for at least one disorder of gut-brain interaction, with those affected showing significantly higher psychological distress, reduced quality of life, and increased burnout risk, yet only 23% had consulted primary care.

KEY POINTS

- Among 378 medical students surveyed at the University of Sheffield, 76% had at least one disorder of gut-brain interaction, with two-thirds having multiple affected sites.
- Gastroduodenal disorders were most common (57%), followed by bowel (49%), oesophageal (29%), and anorectal (26%) disorders, with approximately 50% experiencing painful gastrointestinal symptoms at least weekly.
- Students with DGBI had significantly higher anxiety and depression scores, increased somatic symptom reporting, reduced mental and physical quality of life, poorer eating habits, more frequent medication use, and higher risk of burnout including study exhaustion and disengagement compared to those without DGBI (all $p<0.05$).
- Despite the high prevalence and burden, only 23% of affected students had consulted a primary care provider and only 5% had seen a gastroenterologist for their gastrointestinal symptoms.
- The study used the Rome IV diagnostic questionnaire and validated instruments to assess somatisation, psychological distress, eating disorders, quality of life, and burnout in this population.

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