FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) SURVEY FOR DOCTORS IN TWO UK NHS TRUSTS

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

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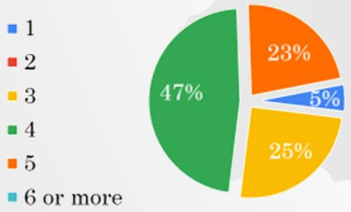
Background/Objectives FGM is a cultural practice prevalent in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It is a human rights violation and global health problem affecting at least 200 million girls and women[1]. It is a criminal offence in the UK for anyone including healthcare professionals (HCP) to perform, assist or arrange FGM procedures. Migration of practising communities outside of their homeland necessitates the establishment of infrastructure in the host country to address the health needs of the affected girls and women. This short survey aims to investigate foundation year doctors' knowledge, awareness and education of FGM, assess understanding of the law and response to certain scenarios. The purpose is to gather survey data (that has not been obtained) and to use the results to improve training in UK medical schools and develop on current FGM guidelines/policy. Ultimately the aim is to improve the care of girls and women with FGM and work towards abolishing the practice.

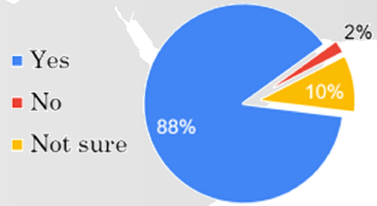
Design/Methodology Google forms were used to collect and analyse responses anonymously. Survey links were sent via NHS email from the foundation administration team to all foundation year training doctors (FY1 and FY2) at Guys and St Thomas' Trust (between 06-08 2019) and East Sussex Trust (09-12 2019). Email link was also sent out to all doctors in the Eastbourne District Hospital A&E department (09-12 2019).

Results We received 17 responses from foundation doctors from each trust and all completed their medical degree in the UK. In addition, we received 25 responses from A&E Doctors and less than half had received their training in the UK. The majority had not encountered a patient with FGM and also lacked confidence in discussing FGM with patients. Not all Doctors had FGM teaching at university, but the majority strongly agreed that they should have. Knowledge about FGM was poor and not everyone thought it was illegal in the UK. Majority thought it was mandatory to report FGM in their trust but the majority did not know how to report FGM in their NHS trust. When given scenarios about confidentiality, girls with FGM under the age of 18 and pregnant women who request reinfibulation (re-suture procedure), the majority answered appropriately and in line with current guidelines/laws, but not all did.

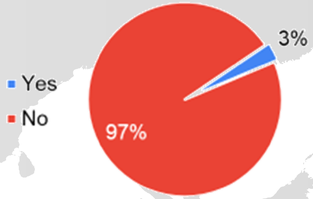
How many WHO classification types of FGM are there?



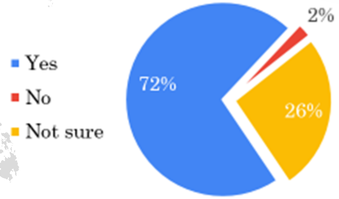
Is FGM practice illegal in the UK?



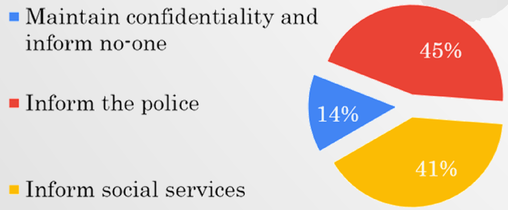
Do you know how to report FGM electronically in your NHS Trust?



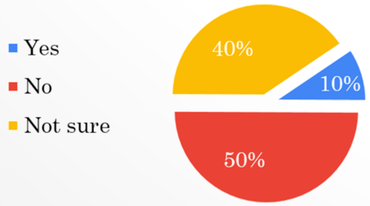
Is it mandatory to report a patient found to have had FGM in your NHS Trust?



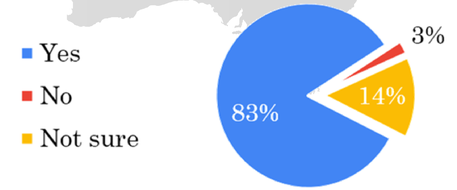
If you came across a female under the age of 18 who has had FGM and who now wishes for you to keep her FGM confidential, who do you have a responsibility to inform?



Pregnant women with FGM Type 3 need reversal (deinfibulation) prior to delivery. Following delivery, if a women requests to have FGM Type 3 again (reinfibulation) should she be allowed to have the procedure?



If a mother tells you that she wishes for her daughter under the age 18 to have an FGM procedure, is there a legal responsibility to inform the police/social services?



Conclusion/Discussion This study demonstrates a need for universal teaching on FGM guidelines and law. Some of the responses to the questions are concerning and there may be UK Doctors who see no problem with FGM. If this is the case, let us hope it can be rectified with improved education. FGM workshops in medical school and foundation training are highly recommended. Doctors need to be made aware of their legal responsibilities and also on how to report FGM. Further surveying is needed to gather data on speciality Doctors and other HCP such as Nurses.

References 1 UNICEF.(2016) *FGM:A global concern*. New York