

# BOOSTING MORALE

Balancing demands and finding motivation in everyday practice



Welcome to the WiseGP newsletter, highlighting how research can help Wise General Practices address the top challenges facing primary care...

Over 2 years ago, the first WiseGP newsletter was released on avoiding [burnout](#). Today this issue remains at the forefront of our practice. Against a backdrop of funding pressures, a shrinking workforce and negative media stories, GPs have continued to face rising demands. The question is, how long can this be sustained?

How do we balance growing demands whilst maintaining our morale within our workplace?



Here we'll consider what motivates us in our everyday work and whether a WiseGP approach could help us to redefine the work we do and balance the demands we face.




A recent Danish study aimed to map what motivates GPs in their work <sup>1</sup>. The study considered professional interests, tangible rewards such as money and altruistic motivators, from helping individuals to wider society. A quarter of respondents reported drawing motivation from all these aspects, with 53% feeling their motivation at work was less about money. Overall, there was significant variation between GPs in what motivated them, suggesting a flexible individualised approach is needed to recruit, retain and motivate GPs.



Research led by Kanter exploring workforce motivation in other professions has identified three main driving factors, a desire for Meaning, Mastery and Membership, with money repeatedly highlighted as a distant 4th amongst motivational factors across multiple sectors.<sup>2</sup>

- People are motivated to do daily tasks by their perceptions of the **meaning** behind their work.
- Motivation also comes from a desire for **mastery** of their job role and delivery of expertise
- Workforce motivation is fostered by being part of a community (**membership**) that supports and enables people to flourish both individually and collectively.

These motivators could apply to our general practice teams, in addition to patients struggling to manage the work of maintaining their health. *Have a look at our examples below of how these principles of motivation could apply in your workplace.*

The 3Ms of workforce motivation described by Kanter		
Meaning	Mastery	Membership
		
Repeat and reinforce a larger purpose	Help people develop deep skills	Create community by valuing individuality
People need to understand why their work matters. Regularly emphasizing the positive impact of work done by an individual is important. Even mundane tasks can be a means to a larger end.	People want to master the skills and expertise required for their work. When given adequate tools and support for their role, people are better able to complete tasks efficiently; even tasks that can be perceived as routine/ mundane.	People need to feel part of a community that supports and enables them to flourish as an individual and collectively. Team working enables individual strengths to be developed and utilized, whilst contributing to larger goals.

Is there more you could do to boost your practice's morale, focusing on enhancing meaning, mastery and membership?

## The **WiseGP** Approach- redefining the work we do

**WiseGP was set up to help GPs reclaim the work of everyday practice, which could include redefining the work we do.**

Several people have used the boiled frog analogy for general practice- that if we keep going and don't notice the effect of the rising temperature (increasing workload) it will be too late. At WiseGP we propose that one factor contributing to this effect is the way we define 'best practice'. Evidence Based Medicine is the gold standard for specialist healthcare. As GPs are increasingly expected to deliver multiple elements of specialist care as well as advanced generalist care, we work harder to follow guidelines informed by scientific evidence, but often we may feel this isn't the best approach for our patients. Applying single disease guidelines strictly to everyone can increase overall work for the health service whilst also placing an increased burden on patients.



*For instance, modern guideline-based care for a person living with 6 long-term conditions can create more than 80 hours of work per month, dealing with 'health-related activities' (see example below).<sup>3</sup>*

### Chang has 6 long-term conditions

1. Hypertension
2. Diabetes
3. Coronary Heart Disease
4. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
5. Knee Osteoarthritis
6. Depression

He spends over 80 hrs/ month working to manage his health conditions

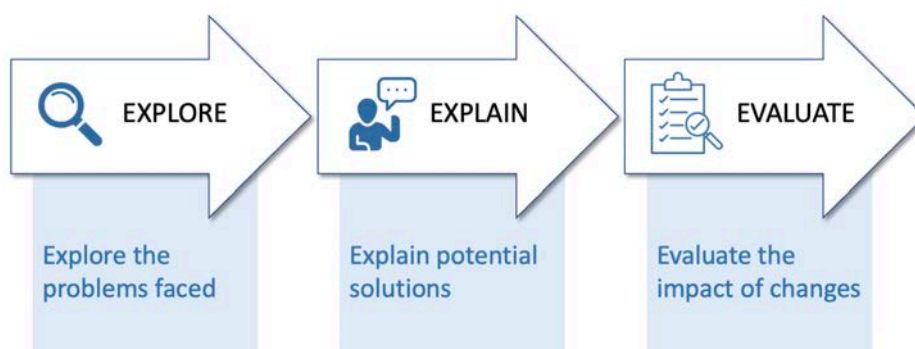
- **19.5hrs managing medication**
- **9hrs supervised interventions**
  - E.g. Physiotherapy, cardiac rehabilitation, therapy
- **8hrs monitoring and follow-up appointments**
  - E.g. Home blood pressure monitoring, laboratory tests, diabetic nurse review
- **44hrs unsupervised behavioural interventions**
  - E.g. Walking, healthier meal planning, therapy actions



### Using the 3E principles of Wise GP – Explore, Explain, Evaluate



Applying the 3E principles of Wise GP – Explore, Explain, Evaluate- can help clinicians take a step back (add some cold water to the pot to stop the frog boiling) and use that opportunity to reflect on what is happening (explore the problems faced), what can be done about it (explain potential solutions) and consider how we will know if it's helped (evaluate the impact of changes). These 3Es can help us to use our WiseGP expertise to rethink and reshape the work we and our patients are doing.



Have a look at our [latest Wise General Practice story](#) which is centred on morale and uses the example of a GP who has shared innovations they have made within their practice to redefine their work. They have taken steps mirroring the 3E principles of WiseGP, including taking stock, inviting change and reflecting on and celebrating their successes.

*Perhaps you could also consider applying these steps to help reclaim control of your work in general practice?*

## Considering burnout...

We've considered what motivates us as a profession and how redefining the work we do can help us to manage excessive workloads. Evidence also suggests that the diagnostic uncertainty we face in everyday practice can contribute to emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.<sup>4</sup> Gaining confidence in working beyond the guidelines can help us to manage this uncertainty- a skill that [the WISDOM course](#) could help you to develop further.

**“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes... including you.”**

- ANNE LAMOTT

If you haven't seen the original WiseGP newsletter on [burnout](#), please have a read for some tips on how you could support yourself and colleagues to face the tide of demand we encounter in everyday practice.



## References

1. Yordanov D, Oxholm A, Gyrd-Hansen D, Bjornskov Pedersen L. Mapping GPs motivation: it's not all about the money; a nationwide cross-sectional survey study from Denmark. *BJGP*. 2023. DOI: 10.3399/BJGP.2022.0563
2. Kanter R. Three things that actually motivate employees. Harvard Business Review. 2013. Available from: <https://hbr.org/2013/10/three-things-that-actually-motivate-employees>
3. Buffel du Vaure C, Ravaud P, Baron G, Barnes C, Gilberg S, Boutron I. Potential workload in applying clinical practice guidelines for patients with chronic conditions and multimorbidity: a systematic analysis. *BMJ Open*. 2016 Mar 22;6(3):e010119. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010119.
4. Zhou AY, Zghebi SS, Hodkinson A et al. Investigating the links between diagnostic uncertainty, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention in General Practitioners working in the United Kingdom. *Front Psychiatry*. 2022 Jul 26;13:936067. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2022.936067.