

Doctors with Dyslexia



Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will be best at any given moment?’ (*American journalist Harvey Bloom in The Atlantic in 1998*)

Doctors who have dyslexia (which can overlap with other neurodiverse conditions) may have difficulties with one or more of the following:

READING AND WRITING

- Reading slowly
- Misreading and missing out words
- Text blurring, moving, dropping
- Having to re-read text several times to get the meaning eg letters etc
- Reading aloud
- Reading information on charts
- Multiple choice questions in exams especially on screens.
- Revising from dense text
- Writing in e-Portfolio
- Spelling
- Making notes/certificates etc

Memory

- Remembering oral information eg. A GP listening to a patient; oral exams
- Handovers
- Recall of instructions
- Remembering names
- Recalling left and right (need to visually map)
- Remembering the alphabet when looking things up in the BNF
- Poor short term memory so instructions are quickly forgotten
- Word retrieval

Time management and organisation

- Prioritising and sequencing jobs and tasks
- Visualising time needed for specific tasks
- Handovers
- Multi-tasking
- Keeping up with admin tasks
- Easily distracted while doing a task

Exams and revision

- Planning revision and timing to cover material
- Remembering information from text or notes
- Doing MCQ questions under time pressure
- Retrieving information quickly in an exam
- OSCE or CSA exams where more processing time is needed for auditory memory difficulties
- Needing more time in exams
- Focusing
- Exhaustion and overload

How to support trainees with Dyslexia:

- Empathetically encourage disclosure and talk to the trainee. Work from their strengths. They will know what helps.
- Realise that trainees may encounter difficulties that have not emerged previously and that each person with neurodiversity is different and has different strengths and difficulties.
- Wherever possible, give time and space to complete paperwork.
- Look at the option of using appropriate software eg Texthelp to read text aloud and highlight. Useful for GPs.
- Dyslexia can include difficulties with mental arithmetic. Enable the trainee to write.
- Be sympathetic and work towards dispelling any negative attitudes that may exist amongst colleagues.
- Challenge existing practices: is there a different and more supportive way of doing it? Most trainees are a brilliant resource for this!

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