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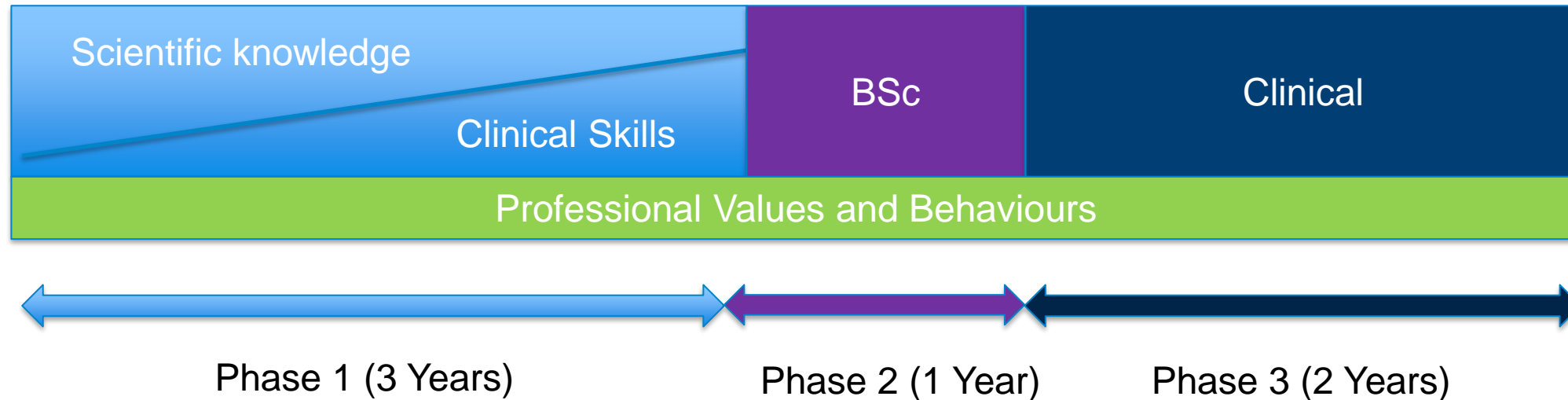
Development and roll out of an Academic Tutoring programme to improve academic skills and promote wellbeing in undergraduate medical students during the COVID pandemic

Education Week 2021

Dr Mike Emerson, Director of Tutoring, School of Medicine

Medical School Context

Scientific knowledge / Clinical Skills	BSc	Clinical
Professional Values and Behaviours		

Phase 1 (3 Years) — Phase 2 (1 Year) — Phase 3 (2 Years)

- Large cohort (~360 students per year)
- Pass or fail professional qualification based on competency
- Blend of college based teaching and clinical placements in NHS from Year 1
- Students with life long passion for medicine

# The challenge of transitioning to Medicine

- Large and broad curriculum – workload
- Need to understand and assimilate topics – difficulty
- Interactive teaching and ongoing assessment – unfamiliar
- Academic excellence in peer group – imposter
- Learning (and volunteering) in NHS - COVID

I failed despite spending 2-5 hours every day working over Christmas.

To be honest, I've never really exerted myself before. I didn't revise at all for A-level or GCSE. I don't know how to.
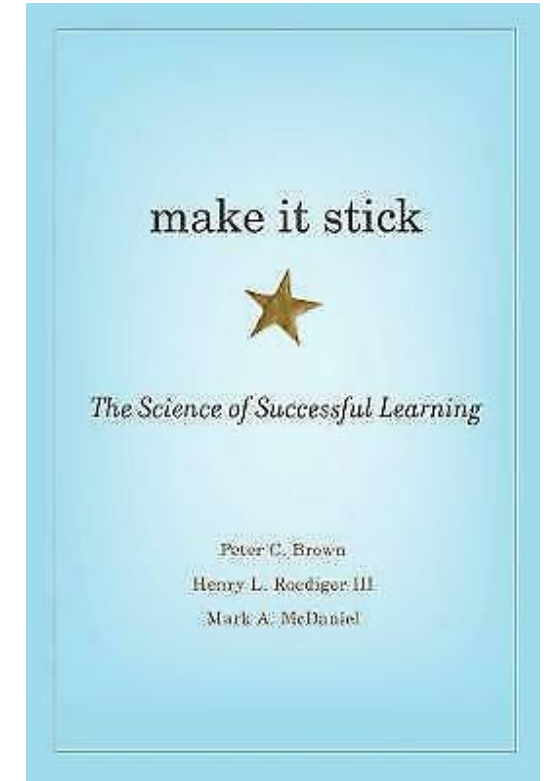
I've worked so hard. I'm exhausted. I'm a straight A student. I can't believe I've failed*

Mitigating circumstances
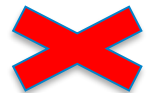
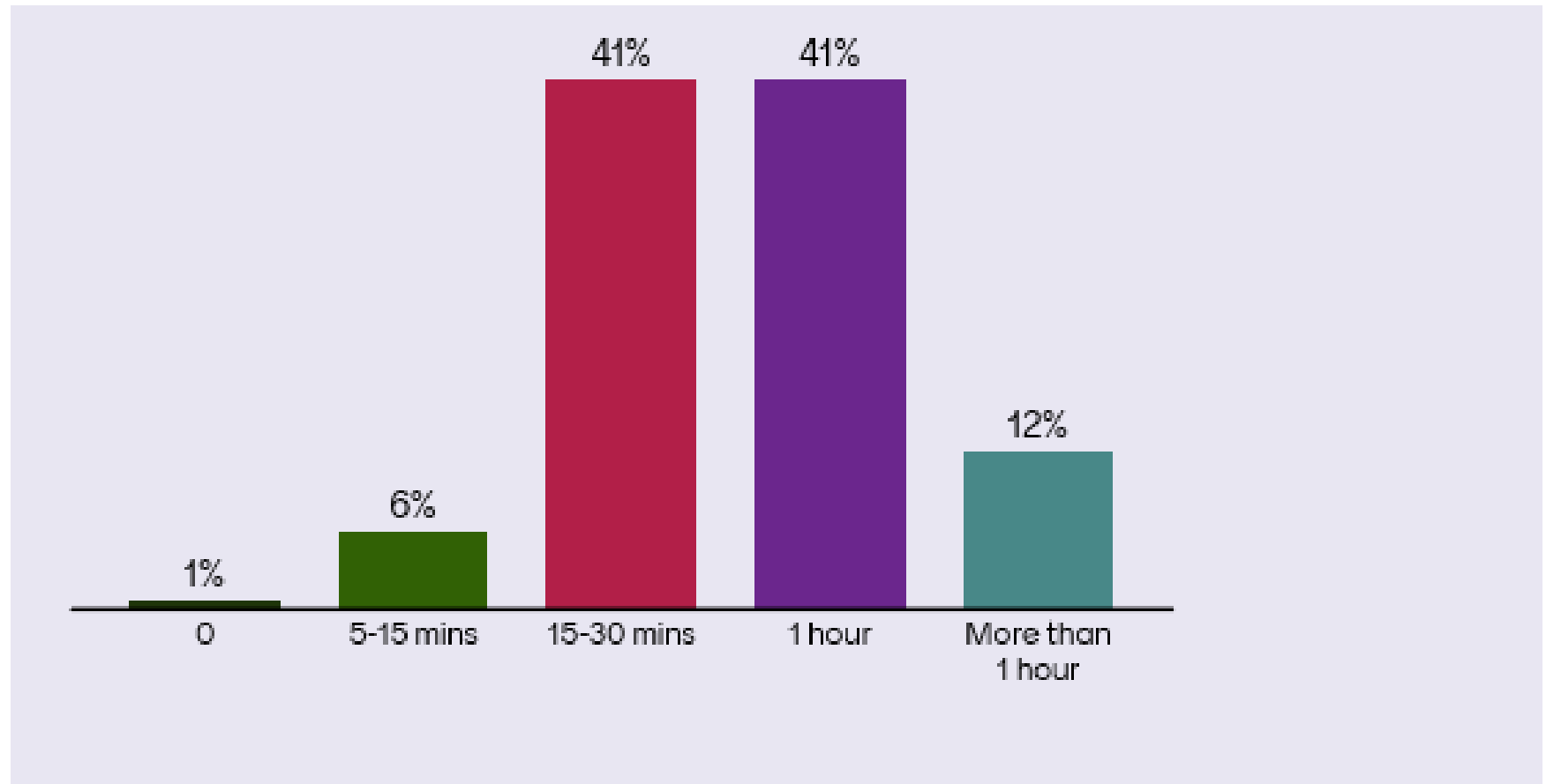# From "Personal" to "Academic" Tutoring in Phase 1

- Identify welfare issues early on and signpost

- Transition from high school to higher education

- Active learning – self-testing, understand and assimilate topics

- Time management – cover curriculum appropriately

- Engage with feedback and manage expectations

- Encourage extra-curricula activities

- Transition into clinical learning

make it stick

The Science of Successful Learning
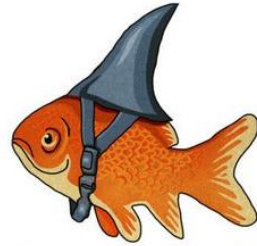
Peter C. Brown
Henry L. Roediger III
Mark A. McDaniel

Induction: Day 1 Medical School

Being successful @imperial

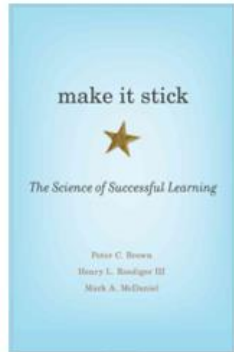Mike Emerson (Director of Tutoring)

Click to edit author name

MINDSET IS EVERYTHING!

Effective learning

- Is hard work

- Often counterintuitive

- You may not like what I'm about to say!

- But it works

- Everything in this presentation is supported by educational research

make it stick

The Science of Successful Learning

Peter C. Brown
Henry L. Roediger III
Mark A. McDaniel

Phase 1a -
Being healthy and well to succeed

Dr Anabel Varela Carver, Senior Tutor Phase 1A

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Student experience of tutoring

- Compulsory termly group and 1-2-1 sessions – **online this year**
- Role of tutor clearly explained
- Consistent dual focus on welfare and study skills
- Students treated as adult partners in a coaching relationship
- Tutors signpost welfare services leaving time to focus on skills development
- Tutors are available and responsive but are not an "emergency service"

As your Academic Tutor I will:

- Meet you as a group around once per term to discuss issues including effective learning, welfare and assessments
- Meet with you individually to develop a learning strategy and discuss your wellbeing
- Be available to you (as soon as practically possible)
- Let you know how I prefer to be contacted (**email is the main professional mode of communication within college – are you set-up and checking your emails?**)
- What do you expect of me?
- What do I expect from you?

What your Academic Tutor does not do

- Know the answer to everything – may refer you on
- Teach you the content of the course – but I can advise you on approaching teaching staff with queries
- Discipline you – I will advise you and support you if you are subject to disciplinary processes
- Provide medical advice or counselling but I can refer you for appropriate support
- Not an emergency service; not a 24 hour service (A&E/999)

Clinical Placements in the NHS

- Unstructured experiential learning
- Patient is priority not student
- Many experiences not available
- New digital learning platforms

"in the way"

"fear of COVID"

"guilty"

"humiliation"

"conflicted"

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Maximising ward/clinic/theatre learning

- Introduce yourself to everyone
- Be reliable, polite and proactive
- Get firm timetable to plan
- Questions, questions, questions?
- Find the enthusiastic teachers
- Ask to present the histories you have gathered/ be watched examining or practising procedural skills
- Ask for feedback and learn from your mistakes

- **To what extent are you maximising your opportunities versus passively "being there"?**

What do you do when not being taught?

1. Digital learning
2. Clerk and examine patients – roam the wards
3. Present real and imaginary stories about patients to yourself and each other
4. Make notes summarizing your learning and outstanding questions, throughout the day
5. Read up on the experiences you have had that day
6. Relax and rest

Rank these activities in order of their importance to your day-to-day learning

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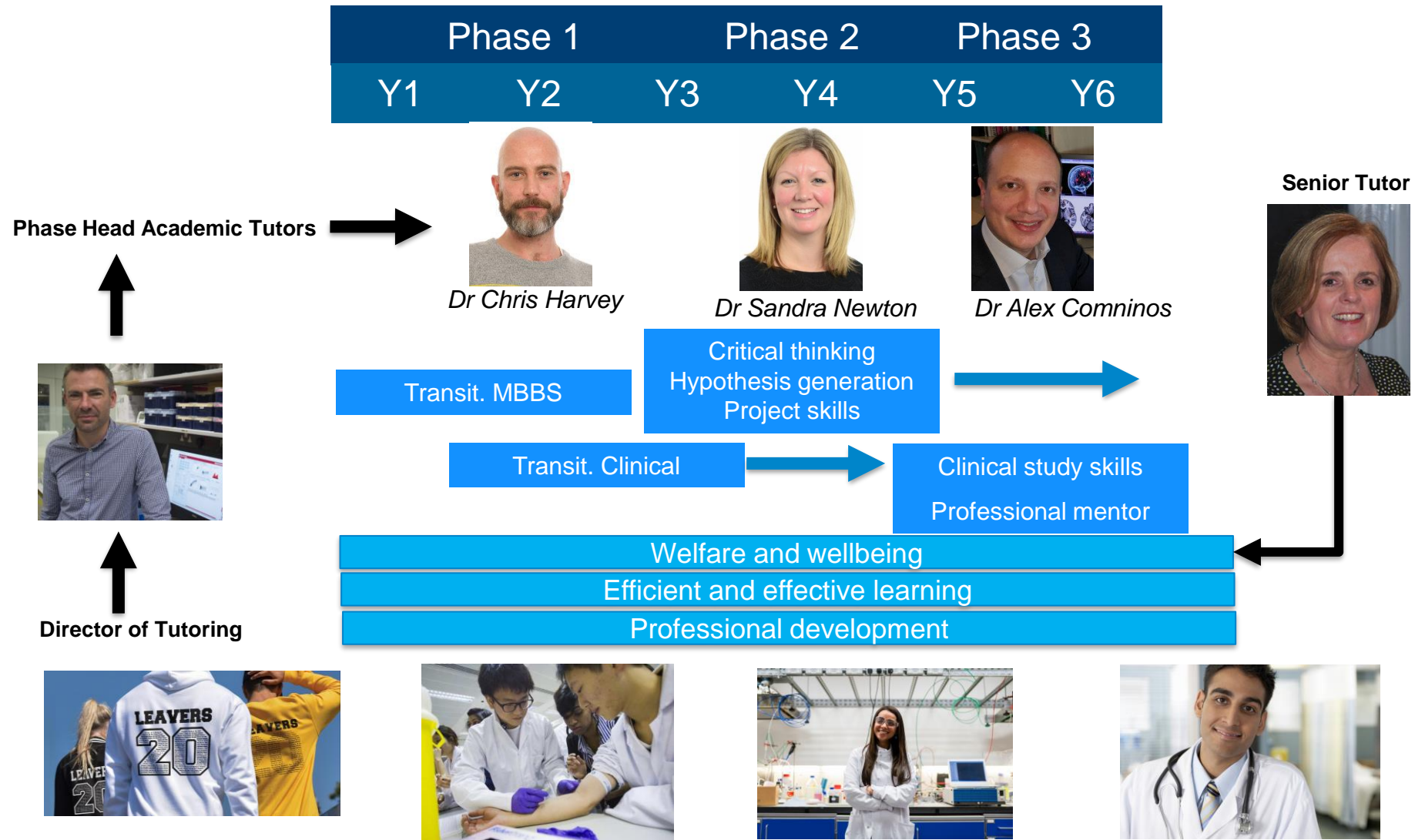
Student comments about effect of Academic Tutoring 2019

"The Academic Support Programme has made me think about the way in which I study and if this is the most efficient method of studying. I feel that it has made the prospect of being faced with a lot of new information to learn less daunting".

"She helped me clear my head when I was overwhelmed by work and by life. Talking with her helped me see everything more clearly and prioritise certain things that I needed for my personal wellbeing".

"I am happier with my work ethic".

"It made me think more critically about the best way to achieve my goals as I hadn't thought about it much before".

"It made me realise how ineffective my revision was, how I wasted time revising the wrong way".

"I learnt that everyone has similar academic struggles and not to feel so worried when I'm struggling myself, there is someone to help us".

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Acknowledgements

- **Head Academic Tutors**

Chris Harvey (Phase 1), Sandra Newton (Phase 2), Alex Comninos (Phase 3)

- **Academic Tutors**
- **Teaching Staff and Phase Leads**

Amir Sam (Head of School), Mary Morrell (Phase 1), Alison McGregor (Phase 2), Omid Halse (Phase 3)

- **Evaluation Team**

Ana Baptista, Kay Leedham-Green, Cristina Koppel, Sue Smith

- **FEO**

Fran Bertolini, Penny Norris, Hannah Behague, Trish Brown

- **Senior Tutors and Director of Student Support**
- **Coaching**
- *Arti Maini*
- **ICSMSU President, Academic and Wellbeing Reps**
- **The tutees! All undergraduate medical students engaging in our tutoring programme.**

Suggested Discussion Points

- How does this compare to tutoring in other Faculties?

- Does focussing on academic skills deliver better welfare support?

- Views on coaching to improve tutoring

- How do we develop best practice across Imperial?

- Is the School of Medicine approach relevant to other disciplines?