

Wellbeing within AZ Animal Science and Technology UK

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Abstract

Over the last 18 months we have been addressing the physical and mental wellbeing needs of Animal Science and Technology (AST) United Kingdom (UK) *in vivo* scientists (IVSs). IVSs are caring for sentient beings and performing complex technical procedures working at pace to meet the AstraZeneca (AZ) pipeline requirements while evolving in a facility of defined footprint and a biosecure environment. Together these bring unique challenges to their wellbeing to support our AZ 'Great Place to Work' ambition.

We have developed a bespoke wellbeing programme with our UK Safety Health and Environment (SHE) group by assessing AST UK health and wellbeing in the workplace through an anonymous survey which gave 3 key areas for development:

- Work-related stress: Site activities to promote awareness of prevention and mitigation of physical/mental health issues.
- Physical health: Created a network of trained ergonomic champions, procured ergonomic chairs and shoe insoles.
- Mental health and compassion fatigue (CF): acknowledged CF, its prevalence, symptoms and mitigation strategy with a professional.

Summary

- Developed an initial 6-month programme dedicated to improving AST wellbeing, as part of the UK SHE Wellbeing strategy.
- Facilitated 'Culture of Care' workshops to understand what 'Culture of Care' means to our *in vivo* scientists.
- Addressed ergonomics, to reduce the incidence and severity of discomfort, increase awareness and self help.

Initiatives

A bespoke programme was made up of three main parts intended to provide information, promote wellbeing and protect wellbeing moving forwards.

Health and wellbeing survey:

To understand how we could improve Culture of Care, first we needed to be informed and establish how the *in vivo* scientist's felt about:

1. Their current health and wellbeing at work.
2. Whether or not they were aware of the existing internal wellbeing resources, supporting mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing.
3. Recognition of compassion fatigue and whether it is experienced by *in vivo* staff within the AST team at AstraZeneca.

Culture of Care workshops:

Two interactive Culture of Care workshops were run with the aim to:

- Reflect on what is meant by Culture of Care, the relationship between care, compassion, compliance and continuous improvement.
- Update our Culture of Care pledge.
- Start planning for Compassion Fatigue mitigation.

Physical health:

Training provided to build knowledge and understanding of the physical pressure that is also experienced as part of *in vivo* work within a controlled barrier facility (Figure 1).

Outcomes

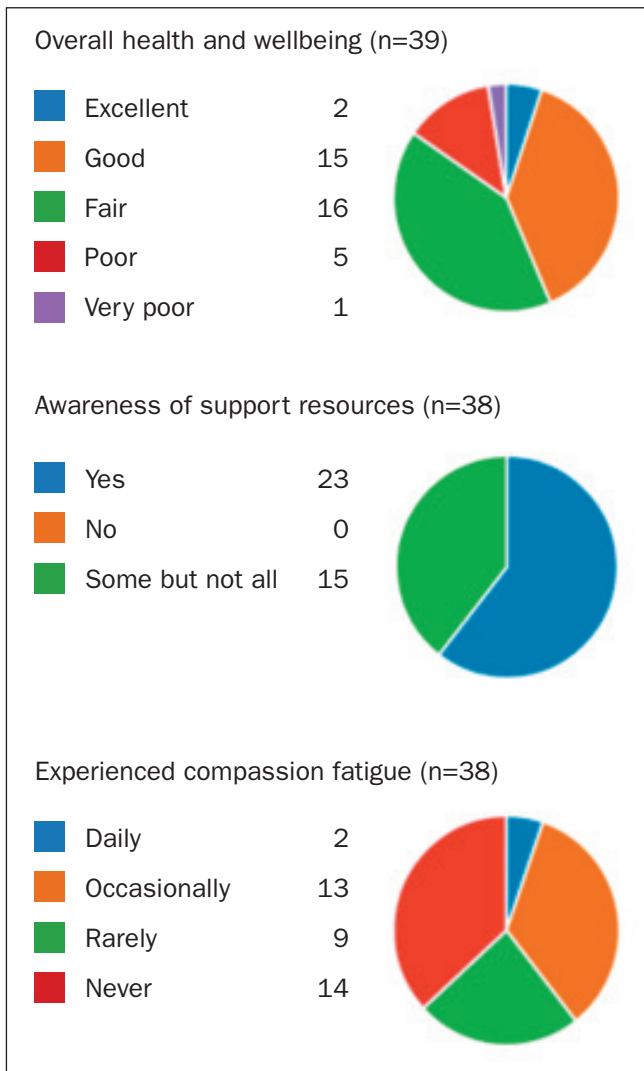


Figure 1. AST health and wellbeing survey.

Whilst encouraging, we want to do more to improve wellbeing and support people in these areas.

Culture of Care workshops:

These workshops provided a wealth of understanding, highlighting the areas that were important to AST (Figure 2) whilst also indicating topics the team would like to hear more about.

What we heard:

By Culture of Care we mean:

Care and respect, people, compassion, Animal Welfare, improvement, integrity, patients and society.

The building blocks are:

Empowerment, psychological safety, recognition, resources, continuous learning and compliance



Figure 2. Important areas to AST.

Outcomes:

Science, welfare, pride, job satisfaction, great place to work, success and reputation

Compassion Fatigue workshop:

We facilitated a compassion fatigue (CF) workshop inviting a guest speaker to learn more. We conducted an anonymous survey to understand the areas the team wanted to focus on.

These are the top 5 actions:

1. Improved planning to include peripheral activities – devising a new planning/resource tool to address this.
2. Strengthen pre/post study meetings with therapy areas – format for these meetings now in place.
3. Learn more about self-care strategies – information curated and sent to the team (Figure 3).
4. Create a resource pack dedicated to CF – information curated and shared with the team.
5. Provide a Decompression Room – a space conducive to reflection, meditation and de-stress activities. Where staff can engage in de-stress activities, process thoughts and feelings associated with the compassionate nature of our work.



Figure 3. Some self-care strategies.



Figure 4. The final Culture of Care pledge, recognised and supported by senior leadership.

Global Culture of Care week:

A global event to showcase our 2023 Culture of Care journey and our updated AST UK pledge (Figure 4). Supported by representatives to discuss mental health first aid, wellbeing, ergonomics and psychological safety.

Providing information relating to wellbeing, mindfulness and care for ourselves, through activities, speakers and posters.

Taking care of ourselves so we can continue to provide the best animal care and welfare!

Next steps

- Initial feedback to the measures taken so far is positive. We will repeat the health and wellbeing survey to assess the impact on staff wellbeing in the workplace.
- Expand on the topics the team would like to hear more about.
- Share key learnings with the wider *in vivo* community.
- Review the current work-related stress risk assessment with the cross functional team.

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