



**Dr. Caroline Ellis-Fortey**

**The Medical Team Role in Mental  
Health – How Elite Football  
Research Relates to Podiatric  
Practice**



# Introduction



## PhD Question

‘What is the role of the medical department in managing mental health issues amongst male professional footballers and can a specifically designed smartphone APP enhance that role?’



# PhD Overview

- Exploring Paraprofessional Mental Healthcare (PMH)
- Immersive interpretivist approach
- Phase I – Interviews with players
- Phase II – Solution Focussed smartphone App intervention pilot study for a medical team and players



# Solution Focussed Brief Therapy (SFBT)

- Evidence-based
- Criticisms
- Non-diagnostic
- Suitability for RCOP Podiatrists

# Findings

- High vs low depression
- Fears of de-selection
- Trust of the individual imperative
- Podiatrists treat in individual rooms – key role in paraprofessional mental healthcare in elite sports
- Solution Focussed Brief Therapy pilot intervention - well received by the medical team and players



# SFBT App Pilot Study (MindPitch™)

- Specific Questions – in sections for scenarios
- Socratic Dialogue – Elenchus
- ‘How would you like to feel?’



## 'I Don't Know' Responses

- 'I know it's a hard question.. Give yourself time.'
- 'You might not know right now...what do you think?.. How do you **think** you'd like to feel?'
- Continue empathic listening- a positive response may arrive later in the conversation

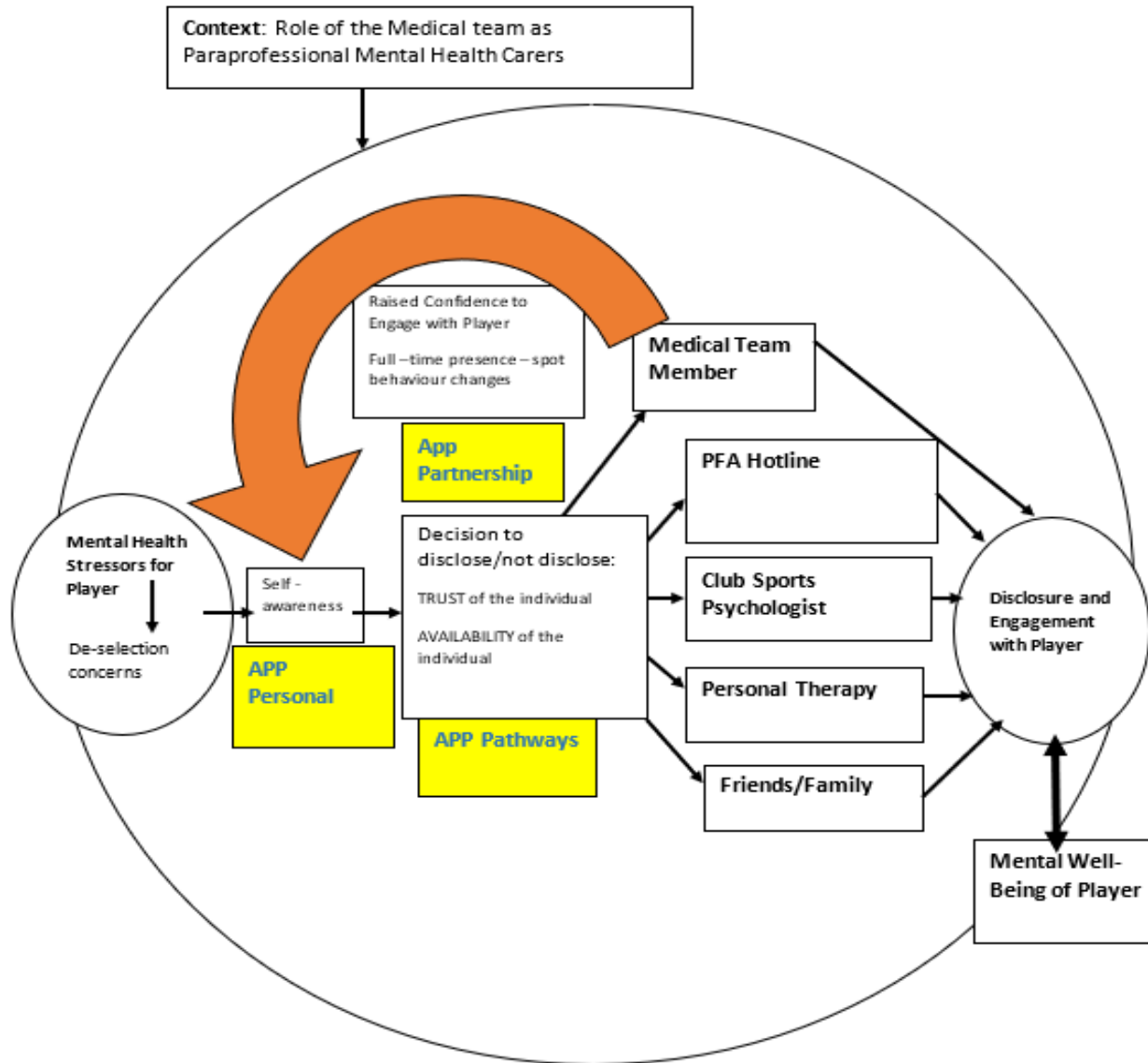
# Position of the Medical Team Member

1. Explicit and implicit knowledge of the population

2. Skills of engagement – ‘tacit knowledge’ plus clear understanding of confidentiality

3. Trust and disclosure

# Engagement



The large arrow depicts the earlier engagement of the medical team member in providing non diagnostic paraprofessional mental health support



# The Future

- Redevelop the not-for-profit APP for members
- Create this decision aid with the Royal College of Podiatry in Partnership
- Promote our paraprofessional mental healthcare role with organisations such as MIND, Mental Health UK
- **We, as podiatrists, are unsung heroes of mental healthcare!!**

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