

how to:



Make Sense of Medical Career Pathways

Melanie Jones

Current Issues and Challenges

- ▶ Students and Foundation doctors understand the need to make career choices but are often still exploring options
- ▶ Career pathways have changed in recent years and consultants may lack the knowledge to provide clear explanations /guidance / support
- ▶ The terminology and nomenclature of medical training posts has changed since 2007
- ▶ Career progression through various posts and how they may be linked to form a pathway for an individual has changed
- ▶ Employers, deaneries and Royal Colleges are all now involved in the recruitment processes.
- ▶ Generation Y career values – flexibility, fun, optimism – mean that gap years, career changes, alternate ways of working are in demand, and the medical career pathway needs to respond.

Career pathways need to be flexible, adaptive and responsive to changes in personal circumstances against a background of the current climate of financial constraints and organisational change. The early career doctor will benefit from developing self awareness, resilience and self-reliance, as well as critical reflection and decision-making skills. Competition to get into training programmes varies both by speciality and location.

The Role of the Educational Supervisor

A key role for the educational supervisor as a career helper is to provide an overview of possible career pathways and enable a discussion of the options available. This should include options which may initially seem to divert from traditionally accepted career pathways. Career helpers can also assist by initiating discussions on compromise – “Is location or speciality more important to you?” “What will you apply for if you don’t get your first choice?”

It is generally helpful to provide some structure to career discussions and there are recognised career planning models which offer logical frameworks to support good career thinking e.g. ROADS (Elton & Reid 2006) DOTS (Law & Watts 1977). But equally, for some doctors it will be important to

allow scope for indecision and ambiguity, if their circumstances or stage of career thinking mean that a clear plan is not yet within reach. There are models of career thinking which value the role of happenstance, uncertainty and opportunistic tactics in a volatile and changeable world of work. (Krumboltz 1998, Pryor and Bright 2003)

Therefore, in all career discussions it is important to emphasise that changing your mind and moving to another pathway / specialty is acceptable – nothing is fixed. Decisions about specific career pathways may need to be revised and adjusted in the light of experience or unforeseen life events.

Issues affecting choice

Personal

- ▶ Location
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Lifestyle
- ▶ Peer Group
- ▶ Attitude to Risk
- ▶ Financial Reward
- ▶ Altruism

Information

- ▶ Competition Ratios
- ▶ Speciality Information
- ▶ Deanery



DEANERY UPDATES

The career pathway options after Foundation programme:

1. **Run-through specialist training** – a programme of between 3 and 6 years duration – ST1 to ST 6 – selection via a competitive entry process to a programme which leads into higher training without further selection provided satisfactory progress is made.
2. **Core training** – a programme of 2-3 years duration – CT1-CT3. After completing Core training the doctor can apply for Higher training (there are currently 61 specialities which award a CCT upon completion of higher training) or for speciality doctor posts.
3. **Fixed term training posts** – usually of 6-12 months duration – these posts give experience of a speciality and enable acquisition of skills and competencies.
4. **Trust doctor posts** – these service posts enable a doctor to enhance their experience, develop key skills and explore chosen specialities before committing to a specific training programme.
5. **Work overseas** – working in another Health system enables a doctor to develop their skills and often gives the opportunity to work in a variety of specialities before making definitive choices.
6. **Career Break** – after working for A levels and then obtaining an medical degree and then completing a 2 year Foundation programme – the prospect of time away from the world of work can be enticing.
7. **Leaving medicine and seeking an alternate career** – whilst not a decision to be made hurriedly, for some this is the correct choice.
8. **Academic career pathways** – this route can be followed at any time after Foundation.

This is a screen shot of the Interactive Career Pathway Map:
www.cardiff.ac.uk/pgmde/careersandrecruitment/index.html

Resources for Doctors giving career help / seeking career information

- Information, links and downloadable career planning tools and support resources for Trainees and Educational Supervisors can be found on the Wales Deanery website: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/pgmde/careersandrecruitment/index.html>
- All Foundation trainees in Wales are offered a series of three career workshops during their Foundation programme to explore career pathways and plans
- Postgraduate Organisers and Centre Managers can provide support for trainees seeking to discuss career pathways.
- A series of video clips featuring doctors working in different specialities in Wales www.doctorstrainingwales.tv
- The Wales Deanery Careers team is available for 1:1 discussions with trainees. pgmedicalcareers@cf.ac.uk
- Each speciality training school in Wales has a Careers lead
- Details of competition ratios may be found on www.mmc.nhs.uk
- Information on specific specialty career pathways may be found on www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk
- “The Roads to Success” book, issued to all F1 doctors in Wales and available in all Postgraduate centre libraries
- See also in this series “How to Support Trainee Doctors in their Career Development”



Further Information

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