

RCPCH MMC Cohort Study (Part2)

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Royal College of
Paediatrics and Child Health

Leading the way in Children's Health

Executive Summary

Background and Methodology

There have been considerable changes to the paediatric medical workforce in recent years and these are likely to continue with working time legislation and a move towards trained doctor solutions. To obtain a better understanding of paediatric trainees career intentions and progress the RCPCH sent a questionnaire to all trainees who began training in paediatrics in 2007, who became members of the cohort. The initial survey was sent out shortly after the cohort completed their ST1 year by using SurveyMonkey. Email addresses were gathered from the College membership and training records.

Part 2 included all respondents and non-respondents to part 1 and was sent using a further SurveyMonkey questionnaire following the cohort's 3rd year of training in October 2010. Data collection was closed in Spring 2011.

For those doctors who had left paediatrics and were willing to be contacted, an in-depth telephone interview survey was carried out during November 2011 and January 2012 to ascertain the reasons for leaving paediatrics.

Response

A good response rate of 80.5% was achieved for part 2 of the study. For those that responded to ST1 87.4% responded to ST2. The attrition rate between ST1 and ST3 was 15%.

Findings

Characteristics of the cohort and attrition

1. Of the 354 respondents, 330 stated that they are currently working in the UK, and 24 stated that are not currently working in the UK. A total of 301 (85%) stated that they are currently training in paediatrics, 284 of whom are in the UK.
2. 39 (11%) stated that they are training in other specialties or working in another career representing attrition from the specialty. Taking into account only those who responded to this survey, the training attrition rate is 15% over a 3 year period at the ST3 cohort stage (approximately 5% per annum).
3. Over half, 20 (51.3%) of those no longer in paediatrics, are pursuing a career in general practice, and 4 (10.3%) are pursuing a career in clinical genetics. Only 5 (12.8%) are not training in another specialty i.e. they are in a career outside medicine or not in a career at present.
4. The figure shows that women represent 76.5% of the cohort (222/290). This compares to the current consultant workforce in which women represent 48.3%.
5. 65.9% of the cohort (191/290) were in an ST3 post on 1st August 2010, whereas 62 doctors were still in a more junior position and a small number, 29 reported having advanced to ST4.

Current post and preferences

6. Overall, 227 (78.3%) are working full time whilst 38 (13.1%) are working LTFT and 25 (8.6%) are working OOP.
7. The majority of the cohort (52%) would prefer to work full time as trained paediatricians. This compares with the current consultant workforce which is approximately 80% full time. Those in ST1 and ST2 have a stronger preference for working less than full time.
8. Overall 71.2% of respondents are happy choosing paediatrics as a career. This rises to 86.7% for those in ST4 and 78.1% for ST2s. There is a similar proportion of females (72.4%) who are happy choosing paediatrics to males (70.3%).

Training progress

9. Overall 69% of respondents reported that they were currently working on the middle grade rota. For those who have passed their exams, 82% are now on the middle grade rota as opposed to 45% of those who haven't passed their exams. This indicates that some relatively junior doctors who have not passed their exams are working at a fairly senior level.
10. Trainees have worked an average of 15.1 months rotation in general paediatrics, 11.5 months in neonatology and only 1.6 months in community paediatrics during ST1, 2 and 3.

Geographic preferences and constraints

11. 87.4% of females would prefer to stay in the UK compared to 80.3% of males.
12. The data show 51.4% of respondents who would like to work abroad intended to do so permanently compared to 48.6% who would prefer to work abroad temporarily. Male doctors showed more of a preference for working abroad permanently (58.3%) than females (47.8%).
13. Over two-thirds of females' choice of training location was limited by geographical constraints while only half of men were limited in the same way.
14. The most common constraints relate to the jobs of the doctors' spouses and home ownership in a particular area. There is little discernible difference between the spread of reasons given by males and females, although it should be noted that females on average provided 1.66 constraints compared to 1.1 for men.
15. Overall, similar numbers and proportions of doctors who have constraints in their training location have constraints when applying for consultant positions. 64.1% of the cohort state that they will be limited suggesting a certain lack of mobility for the future workforce. A higher proportion of females (67.7%) have constraints compared to 53.3% of males.

Career intentions

16. 122 (38.7%) intend to be subspecialty paediatricians, 82 are undecided, 81 (25.7%) intend to be general paediatricians, 17 (5.4%) intend to be community paediatricians and 11 (3.5%) academic paediatricians. Two doctors do not intend to be paediatricians.
17. Very few males intend to be community paediatricians, but the proportion intending to be subspecialists is high – 61% of those who decided.
18. The proportion of trainees intending to be subspecialty paediatricians has risen since part 1 of the study, up to 38.7% from 16.8% in part 1.

19. The percentage of trainees intending to be general paediatricians has fallen since part 1, from 53.7% in part 1 to 25.7% in part 2.
20. The percentage of trainees who were undecided has risen substantially, from 7.7% in part 1 to 26.0% in part 2.
21. Of the 122 respondents that indicated subspecialty intentions, 36 (29.5%) intend to be neonatologists, 12 (9.8%) intend to be oncologists and 11 (9.0%) intend to be paediatric cardiologists.
22. The number of trainees intending to have neonatology as a subspecialty has increased considerably from 6.5% in 2008 to 29.5% in 2011 whilst the number of respiratory subspecialists has decreased by almost half from 8.4% to 4.1% in 2011.
23. There is a disproportionate percentage of trainees intending to be subspecialty paediatricians (52.8%) compared to the number of subspecialty consultants in the 2009 census (32.4%).

Confidence

24. Overall 30.5% (96) were not confident of obtaining their chosen post with 55.6% reasonably confident and 11.4% confident. Males showed higher levels of confidence overall with 20.3% confident compared to only 8.5% of females. Only 26.6% of men were not confident compared to 31.8% of females.
25. There has been an overall decrease in trainees' confidence of obtaining a consultant post since part 1, with 11.5% stating that they are confident compared with 12.3% in part 1, and 30.3% stating that they are not confident compared with 23.3% in part 1.
26. Of those who were not confident of obtaining a post, 53 (58.3%) said this was because there are not enough consultant posts available, 17 (17.7%) stated it was due to competition for a limited number of grid training posts and 9 (9.4%) said that it was because they would not complete training.

Training

27. Overall 37.1% of trainees stated that they had little or no guidance in developing their career. This rate is higher amongst ST3s (41.5%) and ST4s (40%).
28. The cohort provided 747 factors which they believed would improve training. The most common factors were more/protected teaching (131 mentions) and more staff/improved rotas (104 mentions).