

All paediatricians are academic



As the adjoining contribution from Adam Smith Collins shows, involvement in paediatric research opens up many opportunities for a varied and fulfilling career. However, you don't have to be on a formal academic training scheme to get involved or to become a leading paediatric researcher.

Like Adam, some young paediatric trainees know early on that they want to become leaders in paediatric research and choose to undergo a formal integrated academic training pathway through academic foundation posts, academic clinical fellowships, research fellowships and academic clinical lectureships, ending up as Senior Lecturers or Professors in university clinical academic posts as Consultants. Some trainees will choose such a route because they get hooked on the irresistible excitement of laboratory scientific discovery and physician scientists like these are clearly essential in paediatrics if children are to benefit rapidly from advances in scientific and technical knowledge.

But as doctors we are all highly academic and whilst it might not initially appear so, the intention of the current integrated academic training is to be as flexible as possible to facilitate getting involved in research at any stage of training.

The establishment of NIHR in particular means that much of the applied clinical research involving patients is actually funded by the NHS rather than the universities and research councils. NHS Trusts are financially supported through NIHR for their recruitment of patients to clinical trials. By attracting funding through a good idea of their own or through collaboration in multi-centre trials, Consultants can become empowered to negotiate time in their job plans to deliver research. Thus there is no barrier to NHS Consultants becoming leading clinical researchers and they are particularly well placed to carry out research studies for the benefit of their patients.

Developing an academic career through research is a real possibility at any stage, including as an NHS Consultant. Our aim in the UK is to help provide opportunities for all paediatric trainees to gain experience of children's research and acquire the necessary skills to participate in and lead clinical research studies as Consultants. As well as the personal reward and fulfilment this brings, the idea of helping innovate and contribute to better outcomes for children is a powerful motivator for all paediatricians.

PROFESSOR HOWARD CLARK
Chair, Academic Training Committee

"Being an academic paediatric trainee brings fantastic opportunities. Half my time is spent developing advanced imaging techniques to investigate neonatal brain development, injury and outcomes, while also pursuing grid neonatal training. I have been able to develop specialist knowledge, and contributed to our understanding of neonatal brain development. Clinical academia allows me flexibility, novelty and autonomy for at least part of my working life. I have travelled extensively, discussing cutting edge research with experts worldwide... with a little sightseeing along the way! Applying evidence in clinical practice, and developing key clinical questions are vital elements of paediatrics. I would encourage everyone to try research... you just might love it!"

Adam Smith-Collins is Clinical Lecturer in Neonatal Neuroscience at the University of Bristol, and a Neonatal Grid Trainee.

Access our guide to academic paediatric training:
www.rcpch.ac.uk/academictraining