Introducing paediatrics - information for medical students

Recruitment & Careers team
Welcome to our page for medical students, containing all the tools, tricks and tips you need to explore the world of paediatrics in your early years of medical training.

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Start exploring the world of paediatrics

Paediatrics is an exciting and varied specialty, and every day is different.

It offers an unmatched range of opportunities, and career options vary from being a general paediatrician to develop a sub-specialty in a clinical area, from working as a community practitioner to running child health research as an academic.

Whatever pathway you take, here's what you need to know first: paediatrics is one of the most welcoming and well-supported specialties in medicine, and paediatricians are incredibly friendly and endlessly approachable. So, don't be shy in asking a paediatrician (or two or three) about their career and what it has to offer! They will be only too happy to speak to keen, aspiring doctors who are interested in their specialty.

It would be wrong to say that there is never a bad day working in paediatrics, but the variety means you're riding a rollercoaster that is thankfully many more ups than downs.

Dr Emma Coombe, trainee paediatrician - from her blog

And, talking with people on the front line is a great way to get an understanding of what it is like to train and work as a paediatrician, build up contacts, find opportunities to learn and experience more.

Get paediatrics exposure while in medical school

While you're in med school, you are unlikely to get a paediatric placement until around your fourth year of studies, and this will probably be relatively short. Of course this depends on your school, so do a little early research to find out when your paeds block will be.

So it may be that you don't get much formal exposure to paediatrics, and what you do get may not be till quite late on. Not to worry though, as you do not need extensive prior paediatric experience or even paediatric-specific knowledge to
join our training programme. You can see more detail about preparing your application on our information for foundation doctors.

With this in mind, it is important to note that there will be other opportunities to gain some exposure to paediatrics, either in your earlier years of med school, or after you have had your formal placement and any experience will help to expand your understanding of our specialty.

As mentioned above, one of the best ways for medical students to gain further understanding of paediatrics is to speak to the paediatricians in the hospitals you are working at and either look for opportunities shadowing or perhaps assisting with an audit or some research. Whilst that exposure may not necessarily give the most hands-on experience, it is a great way to get to meet and experience the atmosphere and dynamics within the paediatric team.

**Some tips for getting more paeds exposure during med school**

- Use your experience working with children in other specialties, such as general practice, emergency medicine and paediatric surgery. You'll learn valuable transferable skills.

- Incorporate a paediatric aspect into one of your other student placements. For example, if you're working in emergency medicine, you could do an audit on children's care.

- Volunteer with children and young people's clubs, such as those helping people with disabilities or learning difficulties. You'll develop your communication skills and rapport with children.

- You may be able to get paediatric experience during your elective however please be aware that the College isn't able to help with your elective nor provide funding support or bursaries for overseas experiences. However, your medical school should be able to advise and help you set this up.

- Find **paediatric courses** on our free online learning system, RCPCH Compass, which gives you access to quality assured courses to support your professional development and clinical practice. RCPCH members can sign in via their RCPCH online account; others may register for an account directly on Compass.
Join a paediatric society

Whilst you’re in medical school check if your university has a paediatric society. Paediatric societies are often involved with schemes that allow you to interact with fellow aspiring paediatrics and it’s a great way to hear about local events, talks and training opportunities.

We work closely with the United Kingdom Aspiring Paediatrician Society (UKAPS) which was set up in 2014 to help support and inspire all of you - the next generation of aspiring paediatricians! We produce a joint monthly eBulletin which gives you all the latest updates from paediatric societies careers events and courses around the UK and much more! Check out the UKAPS website for more details about them, and sign up for RCPCH membership as a medical student to receive the RCPCH & UKAPS monthly eBulletins.

Attend paediatric careers events

Be on the look out for careers events – there are loads to take advantage of! Attending these events - whether online or in person - will give you the opportunity to speak to many paediatricians and other medical students where you can learn and connect with each who share the same passion as you.

Together with UKAPS we run many events such as the joint UKAPS and RCPCH session at the RCPCH Conference, working together for the annual Tony Jackson Memorial Prize and the #ChoosePaediatrics online workshops.
We also suggest joining our own yearly event, RCPCH Conference. By joining one or more of the three days, you'll get to attend many workshop sessions and connect with medical students, foundation doctors, trainees as well as our senior RCPCH Clinical Officers. Plus, you'll receive firsthand resources to help guide you in your paediatric career. So don't miss out - this is an event not to missed!

**Get help with some useful resources**

There are many ways to help you on your paediatric journey - for example, you can watch our past Careers in Paediatrics workshops on our YouTube channel. These short online workshops explains the recruitment process in detail, talks about the training pathway and gave attendees the chance to ask any tricky questions to our clinicians!

You may also want to watch some of our educational webinars - you'll get updates for health professionals on topics ranging from clinical conditions to service design.

But wait, there's more! We have the The “Best Doctor” page written by children and young people, in which they tell us who the sorts of doctors are that should #ChoosePaediatrics!

Or, take a look at all our content on paediatric careers - including blogs, upcoming events, resources and more.

Do you know about the RCPCH prizes...?

**Apply for one of our prizes**

We offer two annual prizes for medical students which each offer a fantastic opportunity to join RCPCH Conference free of charge - to meet paediatricians, senior clinicals and RCPCH staff!

- **Medical Student Prize** - awarded to one outstanding medical student from each medical school/university around the UK and Republic of Ireland
- **Tony Jackson Memorial Prize** - awarded to a medical student or foundation doctor for their outstanding personal reflections on paediatric experience and one lucky winner will receive £500 reward!
Become an RCPCH member (it's free!)

By signing up, you'll have access to a wide range of information and opportunities such as a discounted price attendance at the RCPCH Conference and several educational courses, as well as regular updates from our monthly joint eBulletins from RCPCH and UKAPS.

Moving on from medical school?

Once you’ve graduated, UK qualified doctors complete a Foundation Programme, which is normally two years. During their second year of foundation school, doctors can apply for their choice of specialty training, such as paediatrics. We’ve got more information especially for foundation doctors.

You can start reading our guidance for applying to Level 1 paediatric specialty training. Also check out our introducing paediatric training page, first published in October 2021, to find out about the training pathway and the options. These can help you start thinking what you can bring to the application process, including the interview, that will demonstrate your interest and understand of paediatrics.