The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges in Wales (AMRCW) presents its strategic view on training doctors in Wales

Principles

Wales should and can provide a safe and supportive learning environment for most specialties

Excellent training of doctors is essential for the future health of the population in Wales.

- All doctors should acquire some generic and generalist skills at the start of their training. This will include good communication skills, including an appreciation of patients’ life circumstances, needs and preferences. Training must allow a trainee to acquire the attitudes and behaviours described in GMC Good Medical Practice.

- Training should meet the needs of individual trainees but must cover the core competences needed for the chosen specialty.

- All trainees should have adequate exposure to clinical situations to gain relevant competences.

- All trainees should have a named clinical supervisor and a learning plan.

- There must be flexibility in the contract to permit a sensible work life balance. This may include the need for career breaks or less than full time training without causing significant disadvantage to the trainee’s opportunities or progress when in work.

- Flexibility should be given where possible in line with GMC regulations to allow trainees to change career pathway if needed. Some experiences and competencies may be recognised across programmes.

- Training must be rigorous, progressive and incorporate independent practice with appropriate supervision and reflection.

- Trainees should be treated with respect and dignity and be involved in decisions about work planning.

- Trainees should receive fair feedback on their learning and care provision performance in a constructive manner.

Tensions

Service vs training: There may be conflicting priorities between the needs of service providers and the requirements of the Deanery to ensure a good learning environment. We recognise that trainees provide a valuable service contribution to patient care but this should not be at the cost of time to learn and reflect on performance.
• Opportunities should be provided for some trainees to gain experience in other institutions where parts of the curricular needs cannot be met by the host institution.

• It is important trainees understand, experience and learn to cope with challenging situations which arise in clinical practice. Trainees have a duty to respond to and manage urgent patient needs. Equally trainees should not be expected to work outside their competences.

• Most trainees have an important role in providing service and this is an important component of training. However, provision of service must not be to the detriment of training and trainees must be adequately supervised at all times.

Identifying deficiencies: Trainees may observe episodes of poor practice. They may note deficient processes or systems which risk harm to patients or staff. Like any other doctor they have a professional responsibility to report that to an appropriate person.

• Trainees should be able to report episodes of poor behaviour in colleagues or poor care without fear of retribution or subsequent discrimination.

• Trainees should be able to make criticism of aspects of their training and expect a reasonable response without fear of retribution or subsequent discrimination.

Training in Wales and the wider world

There is national and international competition to recruit and retain the best trainees and consultants. Wales cannot function in isolation.

It must be recognised that:
• Welsh trainees are part of an international market, as are those from other parts of the UK.
• Whilst local trainees may choose to settle in Wales, this should not be presumed.
• Wales has to be able to offer the best contemporary standards of training when compared to other parts of the UK. Recruitment becomes more difficult if there is a perception that training opportunities in Wales are out of line with the rest of the UK, or that Welsh trainees will not be able to compete against those from other parts of the UK.
• Welsh Trainees will expect to be able to gain experience in non-Welsh centres, either as part of a highly specialist training scheme requiring placement at a national centre, or as part of recognised Out of Programme Experience, such as an overseas fellowship.

Rural Wales

As a primarily rural country, Wales has some practices and units where medical staff recruitment is challenging. The Academy suggests that:

• Special emphasis is given to exposing medical students and medical trainees to rural areas in the countryside
• Those who express an inclination to work in such areas have their training tailored to equip them with the necessary skills.
AMRCW calls on Local Health Boards, Trusts and the Deanery to ensure that:

- Training is provided according to the principles above
- There is a commitment to developing and maintaining high quality training environments
- Organisations work collaboratively at local and national level to deliver and quality assure the training.
- There is recognition of the tensions between the needs of routine training and service provision. Training should include a contribution to service provision as part of essential experience in organising and providing clinical care. However providers should not be over reliant on the services provided by trainees. Trainees have access to appropriate clinical supervision at all times
- Trainees are treated with dignity and respect at all times as should all NHS employees

All doctors and trainees in Wales should refer to the Gold Guide, issued by COPMeD and GMC Standards for MedEd as guidance for Trainees across the whole of the UK.

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