

Health Medical Leadership Careers

A statement from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

February 2019

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges strongly endorses the importance to UK healthcare of medical leadership at all levels.

Medical leadership is effective in many ways and at many levels. Nationally this includes colleges, faculties, NHS bodies, universities and public sector organisations such as the General Medical Council. At a regional level there is significant involvement of doctors in primary care organisations, commissioners and regional NHS bodies. At a local level, medical leaders are crucial to the leadership of organisations in addition to their pivotal role in everyday clinical care.

A growing evidence-base demonstrates the power of front-line leadership in producing quality outcomes for patients.¹ This also applies at the most senior organisational level with specific research demonstrating a positive association between the quality of patient care in hospitals and having a medical chief executive.² A significant number of doctors on trust boards also brings a quality advantage.³ It is essential, therefore, that medical leaders are supported, and that leadership ability is nurtured throughout the medical career to guarantee a ready supply of talented and able medical leaders at every level.

In parallel, it is also vital that disincentives are removed and that an optimal environment is guaranteed to allow medical leadership to succeed. In a study for the Secretary of State in 2017, the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management showed that the relative paucity of medical chief executives in the UK is, at least in part, caused by employment factors including loss of tenure and reduction in salary.⁴ Given the positive benefits of medical leadership, the NHS needs to address these disincentives.

Training plays a key role in enhancing the skills of today's leaders as well as preparing future generations. Training in leadership and management needs to emulate the highly successful UK medical training in all its forms. Tokenistic short courses have little sustainable value – leadership and management development need to be evidence-based, systematic with multiple learning methods employed.⁵ Leadership is a key feature of the GMC's Generic Professional Capabilities expected by all doctors in training. Medical royal colleges play an important role in integrating these into curricula, providing development opportunities and supporting doctors who choose to develop their leadership skills alongside clinical training.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges endorsed the establishment of the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management in 2011, an organisation dedicated to improving patient outcomes through better medical leadership. Since its inception, FMLM has set standards, established fellowship awards, and supported doctors, healthcare teams and organisations across the UK to improve their medical leadership. FMLM continues to work alongside the Academy and the medical royal colleges to support and develop doctors who are safe and effective clinicians as well as capable leaders so that patients and healthcare services across the UK benefit.

- 1 Sarto, F. and Veronesi, G. [2016] Clinical leadership and hospital performance: assessing the evidence base. BMC Health Services Research, 16 [Supplement 2], [169], 85-97.
- 2 Goodall, A. [2011] Physician-leaders and hospital performance: is there an association? The Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), IZA Discussion paper, 5830 (July 2011), Bonn: IZA. Available at: www.amandagoodall.com/CESifo_DICE-Spring_2013_Goodall_FINAL.PDF

Tasi, M., Keswani, A. and Bozic, K. [2017] Does physician leadership affect hospital quality, operational efficiency, and financial performance? Health Care Management Review, July 11.
- 3 Veronesi G, Kirkpatrick I, Altanlar, A. Clinical leadership and the changing governance of public hospitals: implications for patient experience. Public Administration. 2015; 93(4):1031-1048
- 4 Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/clinicians-moving-into-senior-leadership-barriers-and-enablers
- 5 Beer, Finstromm and Schrader [2016] Why leadership training fails – and what to do about it, Harvard Business Review, October, pp50-57. Available at: www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/16-121_bc0f03ce-27de-4479-a90e-9d78b8da7b67.pdf