

Part-time work in specialist medicine

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF A REPORT OF A WORKING PARTY OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

It is increasingly recognised in medicine, as in other professions, that both men and women may wish to train and work part-time. Failure to provide part-time opportunities is likely to deprive specialist medicine of skilled staff and to affect the quality of patient care.

The difficulties for anyone wishing to train or pursue a career part-time are listed below.

For training posts:

- the bureaucracy involved in obtaining posts
- having to show an over-riding personal commitment or disability
- the increased length of time required to satisfy training regulations
- uncertainty about the place of research
- lack of status and excessive demands on the part-time trainee.

For the career grade:

- an unrealistic expectation of the amount of clinical work a part-time consultant can undertake
- the expectation that a similar amount of administrative work will be done as by a full-time consultant
- the need for continuing education which is as great as for a full-time post

Recommendations

Training grades

- Information on opportunities for part-time training should be made available at all stages through the deans of medical schools, postgraduate deans, the Joint Committee on Higher Medical Training (JCHMT) and all consultants in specialist medicine. A nominated individual within the JCHMT should act as a focus for enquiries coming to the Royal College of Physicians and should stimulate action with the various specialty advisory committees to foster part-time training.
- Postgraduate deans should nominate a specific member of staff to assist applicants wishing to train part-time. All deans should hold adequate funds for part-time training.
- The Department of Health should create further

training posts as required. Applications for the Senior Registrar Programme (EL(93)49) should be accepted throughout the year from anyone who wishes to train part-time for whatever reason.

- Hospital trusts and health authorities should create more part-time posts.
- The Department of Health, the Royal College of Physicians and the JCHMT should accept that not all part-time trainees will take the same time to complete training and that it is the total content of training that is of prime importance in awarding recognition.
- All consultants in specialist medicine should ensure that part-time trainees have the same training opportunities as full-time trainees.
- Job descriptions should be appropriate to the number of sessions worked.
- The Royal College of Physicians should actively pursue its role in removing the perceived prejudices against part-time training.

Career grades

- More part-time consultant posts should be created by the Department of Health, trust hospitals and health authorities.
- The Royal College of Physicians should continue to press for such posts.
- Job descriptions should realistically reflect the amount of work a part-time consultant can do.

The Royal College of Physicians affirms that there is no medical specialty for which part-time training is not applicable and that consultants working part-time should be valued for their contribution in exactly the same way as their full-time colleagues.

Members of the Working Party

Professor Leslie A Turnberg, President; **Professor Dame June Lloyd**, Chairman; **Dr J E Collins**, Honorary Secretary; **Ms I Allen**; **Dr T Greally**; **Dr M Hammersley**; **Professor I B Houston**; **Dr R P Walt**; **Dr E M Winter**; **Dr P I M Allen**; **Professor D R London**, Registrar; **Professor B L Pentecost**, Linacre Fellow.

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