

CORRESPONDENCE



Comment on 'Trainee research network (TRN): a potential global model for promoting research training and outputs among trainees'

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TO THE EDITOR:

We agree with Ong et al. [1] that trainee research networks offer an excellent opportunity for trainees to get involved in prospective studies that have the potential to change practice. We would like to highlight a further study published by the London Ophthalmology trainee Clinical Trials Network: Eye care in

the intensive care unit during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond [2].

We believe there is an opportunity for undergraduates to harness the power of collaborative working, using the trainee network model, with appropriate supervision. For each of the 45 UK medical schools listed on the Medical Schools Council website, we searched the Student Union and Medical Society websites: 25 out of 45 medical schools (55.6%) had an active ophthalmology society. Email addresses were visible for 20 of the 25 societies, and 21 out of 25 had public Facebook pages. The number of student ophthalmology societies has increased in proportion to the rising

Table 1. List of UK medical schools with an active ophthalmology society and contact details.

Medical school	Name of ophthalmology society	Society email address	Facebook page
Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry	Barts and The London Ophthalmology Society	ophthalmology@bartslondon.com	Yes
University of Birmingham College of Medical and Dental Sciences	University of Birmingham Ophthalmology Society	general.bosociety@guild.bham.ac.uk	Yes
University of Bristol Medical School	University of Bristol Ophthalmology Society (UBOS)	ubosoc@gmail.com	Yes
University of Cambridge School of Clinical Medicine	Cambridge Ophthalmology Student Society	cuophthsoc@gmail.com	Yes
Cardiff University School of Medicine	Cardiff University Ophthalmology Society	Ophthalmology-Society@cardiff.ac.uk	Yes
University of Dundee School of Medicine	Dundee University Ophthalmology Society	Unknown	Yes
The University of Edinburgh Medical School	Edinburgh University Ophthalmology Society (EUOphS)	edinburghuniophthalmology@gmail.com	Yes
University of Exeter Medical School	Exeter Ophthalmology Society (EOS)	ophthalmology@groups.exeterguild.com	Yes
University of Glasgow School of Medicine	Glasgow University Ophthalmology Society	ophth.gla@gmail.com	Yes
Imperial College London Faculty of Medicine	Imperial College Ophthalmology Society	ophthalmology@imperial.ac.uk	Yes
King's College London GKT School of Medical Education	KCL Ophthalmology	ophthalmologykcl@gmail.com	Yes
University of Leeds School of Medicine	Leeds Ophthalmology Society	Unknown	Yes
University of Liverpool School of Medicine	Liverpool Ophthalmology Society	ophthalmology@society.liverpoolguild.org	Yes
University of Manchester Medical School	University of Manchester Ophthalmology Society (UMOS)	man.umos@gmail.com	Yes
Newcastle University School of Medical Education	Newcastle University Ophthalmology Society	Unknown	Yes
Norwich Medical School	UEA EyeSoc	eyesoc.uea@gmail.com	Yes
University of Nottingham School of Medicine	Ophthalmology Society	Unknown	No
Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry	Plymouth Ophthalmology Society	plymophthalmology@gmail.com	No
Queen's University Belfast School of Medicine	Queen's University Belfast Ophthalmology Society	ophthalmology_soc@qub.ac.uk	Yes
University of Sheffield Medical School	Sheffield Ophthalmology Society	sheffeldeyesoc@gmail.com	Yes
University of Southampton School of Medicine	Southampton University Ophthalmology Society (SUOS)	eyesocsoton@gmail.com	Yes
St George's, University of London	SGUL Ophthalmology Society	sgul.ophthalmologysoc@gmail.com	Yes
Swansea University Medical School	Swansea University Ophthalmology Society	Unknown	No
University of Central Lancashire School of Medicine	UCLan Ophthalmology Society	uclanophthosoc@gmail.com	Yes
University College London Medical School	UCL Ophthalmology Committee (Ophthalmology Division of UCL Surgical Society)	su-surg-soc@ucl.ac.uk	No

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Table 2. UK medical schools without an active ophthalmology society listed on their Student Union or Medical Society websites.

Medical school
University of Aberdeen School of Medicine and Dentistry
Anglia Ruskin University School of Medicine
Aston University Medical School
Brighton and Sussex Medical School
University of Buckingham Medical School
Edge Hill University Medical School
Hull York Medical School
Keele University School of Medicine
Kent and Medway Medical School
Lancaster University Medical School
University of Leicester Medical School
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
University of St Andrews School of Medicine
University of Sunderland School of Medicine
University of Warwick Medical School
Brunel University London, Brunel Medical School
Ulster University, School of Medicine
University of Chester Medical School
University of Nottingham—Lincoln Medical School
University of Oxford Medical Sciences Division

number of UK medical schools. In 2018, Hsiao and Tatham reported that 18 out of 32 universities (56.3%) had an ophthalmology society Table 1.

Student ophthalmology societies facilitate research, networking, teaching and provide exposure to ophthalmology as a career. To support this, Hsiao and Tatham [3] showed that the percentage of students entering ophthalmology training was 1.37-fold greater in universities with an ophthalmology society Table 2.

The existing group of ophthalmology societies with their collection of students interested in ophthalmology could increase research involvement and output amongst medical students and enhance communication, encouraging collaboration between students from different universities. Societies could work together to host conferences such as the National Student Ophthalmology Conference 2022, a collaboration by six student societies across the UK. There is a precedence for research networks amongst medical students such as the Student Audit and Research in Surgery (STARSurg) collaborative, the first national audit and research network involving students from all UK medical schools,

which has increased confidence amongst medical students to conduct clinical research [4].

An undergraduate network could help channel enthusiasm for Ophthalmology research amongst medical students and lead to high quality outputs. This is especially important following the COVID-19 pandemic which has reduced clinical exposure, research opportunities and mentorship for students [5].

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DATA AVAILABILITY

All data generated and analysed are included in this published article.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

JM drafted the paper and collected the data; CS and VN revised and edited.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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