

Problem

Participation in research and clinical governance is a vital aspect of training in anaesthesia. Recent changes in training structure, working pattern, and placement duration make it increasingly difficult for trainees to engage in substantive existing research projects during any particular rotation. This has resulted in decline in the number of trainees participating in academic research projects during their training. Various national trainee surveys have consistently highlighted a perceived lack of opportunities by trainees as a major factor behind this. This problem demands an innovative approach that will encourage trainees into academic anaesthesia without compromising on core clinical training.

Assessment

The North West School of Anaesthesia delivers training to 264 trainees in 13 local trusts. We conducted an online survey of trainees in March 2013; to understand the barriers and opportunities for participation in research during anaesthetic training. Of the 152 respondents, only 30 (20%) had participated in research activities. Only 25 (16.8%) felt that adequate opportunities are provided in training. 125 (82.8%) trainees responded positively to a network led approach to research in the region.

Absence of leadership, poor training in research methodology and lack of training friendly opportunities were the key barriers to identified in our survey.

Strategy

We established the *North West Research and Audit Group* (NWRAG) in response to this problem. This is trainee-led network, dedicated to providing research and audit opportunities for anaesthetic trainees in the region. Trainees interested in gaining such experience we invited to become members. We formed a network of enthusiastic consultant linkmen to provide pastoral support to NWRAG trainee members and be responsible for research governance at trust level. To facilitate information dissemination, we designed a website (www.NWRAG.com), and maintain an active presence on social media.

We developed the concept of *trainee friendly projects*. These projects allow one set of trainees to start and a subsequent set to continue and complete the project. Our aim is to create opportunities for trainees and subsequently build a capacity and passion for clinical research in our school.

We are currently facilitating two such projects: a *Systematic Review Group* (SRG) and multi-centre audit. The SRG allows trainees to engage in academic research activities, by participating in writing up systematic reviews with senior trainees providing the necessary statistical training at regular interactive workshops.

It took three months, from the survey, to NWRAG becoming fully operational.

Outcomes

NWRAG has been a huge success with the trainees and consultants in the region. In three months our website has had over 4000 individual hits and NWRAG has over 150 active members. Trainee led multi centred audit and research projects are now underway across the North West. The SRG has undertaken work on two meta- analyses. Over 25 trainees are now engaged in research activities directly as a result of activities of NWRAG in four months. We have also organised a series critical appraisal and research methodology workshops.

Ongoing dialogue with fellow trainees, consultants and educators through traditional streams and social media was another feature in development of this organisation.

Our actions to date have addressed most of the feedback that we received from our survey. By creating a trainee led network, we have enabled trainees to take ownership of their ideas, and provided a platform for translating their ideas into real time research. Our ongoing success in engaging trainees lies in both tailoring projects and training to the needs of the trainees and using the ensuing expertise to develop more ambitious projects.

Declaration of Interests: Nothing to declare

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