

Training matters

Evaluation of a psychiatric training scheme

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Rotational training schemes are now well established as appropriate means of organising psychiatric training in the UK. There are already a number of good descriptions of how schemes are organised and managed (Soni *et al*, 1987; Davies, 1990) and one report of the experiences of trainees in a particular scheme (Fahy & Beats, 1990).

The Royal College of Psychiatrists through its accreditation visits evaluates the quality of training schemes in a comprehensive manner. The College's reports provide valuable insight into the mechanics of training schemes and into the resources and educational opportunities available to trainees locally. The importance and contribution of accreditation is not in question. However, accreditation does not include evaluation of the outcome of training schemes as measured by the performance of trainees in the College's examinations or by the immediate career of trainees successful in the MRCPsych examination.

Performance of trainees in the College's examinations has been reported upon (Cawley, 1986) and the subsequent career of psychiatrists successful in the MRCPsych examination has also been investigated (Bhate *et al*, 1986). The aim of our study was to apply these outcome measures to our own training scheme. We also examined whether there were differences between UK and overseas graduates.

The study

The All Birmingham Rotational Training Scheme was the subject of this study. The scheme includes 32 registers and 12 SHOs drawn from psychiatric units in the Birmingham Health Authorities and also the neighbouring Sandwell and Solihull Authorities. The organisation and management of the scheme have been described (Davies, 1990).

All trainees who left the scheme between 1986–1991 were included in the study. On leaving the scheme, all trainees had a data sheet completed which recorded their name and age; date of joining the scheme; examinations passed while on the scheme;

name of institution which awarded their initial medical degree; post gained on leaving the scheme; and placements during their period on the scheme. These data formed the basis of our study.

Findings

Sixty-six trainees left the scheme in the study period. There were 51 men and 15 women. Thirty-nine (59%) were UK graduates and 27 (41%) were overseas graduates. The overall mean age at which the trainees joined the scheme was 29.4 years. However, the mean age of UK graduates was 27.3 years compared with 31.6 years for the overseas graduates.

Forty-six (69.6%) trainees had passed the MRCPsych examination by the time they left the scheme. There were six (9%) who had succeeded only in the first part of the MRCPsych examination and 13 (19.6%) who had either not attempted the examination or had not succeeded in the first part of the examination. The results were remarkably similar for both UK and overseas graduates. Nineteen (70%) overseas graduates and 27 (69%) UK graduates had passed the MRCPsych examination. Information was unavailable in one case.

Thirty-seven (56%) trainees obtained senior registrar posts. There was no difference between UK graduates, of whom 23 (58%) obtained senior registrar posts, and overseas graduates, of whom 14 (51%) also obtained such posts. The majority were appointed to posts in the West Midlands region. Two UK graduates and overseas graduates respectively became lecturers or research fellows. Three overseas graduates emigrated or returned to their native countries following success in the MRCPsych examination.

There were three (10%) overseas graduates who became time expired trainees and all three had not succeeded in the MRCPsych examination whereas one of the two (5%) UK graduates who was time expired had successfully completed the MRCPsych examination.

Comments

This study shows that the majority of trainees in a well organised scheme go on to succeed in the MRCPsych examination. This was true for both the UK and overseas graduates. The majority of those who succeeded in the examination obtained senior registrar, lecturer or research posts.

There is evidence that overseas graduates perform poorly in the MRCPsych examination (Cawley, 1986). This is also true for the MRCGP examination (Wakeford *et al*, 1992). There are also four times as many UK graduates still occupying registrar posts following success in the MRCPsych examination (Bhate *et al*, 1986). Our findings do not support these previous reports. However, we were unable to examine methodically whether overseas graduates needed many more attempts at the MRCPsych examination or senior registrar interviews before succeeding in either.

The proportions of overseas graduates working in the grade of registrar or below in psychiatry may be as high as 65% (Bhate *et al*, 1986). However, it is notable that only 41% of trainees in our scheme were overseas graduates and it could be argued that they were not representative of overseas graduates as a whole, but rather were a highly selected group who were likely to succeed anyway. While this may be true, it is also likely to be the case that the quality of training offered on the All Birmingham Scene contributed to the success of all the trainees,

irrespective of where they initially gained their medical qualifications.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the assistance of Mrs Gillian Penny and Mrs Valerie Jackson in collecting the data and making them available to us.

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This lecture will be given by Professor Julian Leff on *Community Psychiatry: Dream or Nightmare* on 29 April 1993 and the **Annual Day Conference in Psychiatric Rehabilitation in the Community** will be held on 10 June 1993. Both events will be held at the Postgraduate Medical Centre, East Surrey Hospital,

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