Specialty training vacancies after first round increase by 30% in a year

The number of unfilled vacancies in specialty training after the first round of recruitment increased by 30% this year, data from Health Education England show.

In 2017, 908 of the 7487 training posts available were left unfilled after the first round of recruitment to first year specialty and core training. This is a 31% increase from 2016 when 693 of the 7366 available training posts were left unfilled at the same stage of the recruitment process.

Of the 908 unfilled posts, over 90% were in four specialties: general practice; core psychiatry training; acute care common stem (ACCS) acute medicine and core medical training; and paediatrics. General practice accounted for more than half of the unfilled vacancies.

Although general practice training had the largest number of unfilled vacancies in 2017, recruitment to the specialty was more successful in 2017 than in 2016. The overall fill rate for general practice increased by 1.5% from 2016 to 2017.

In general practice, there were 518 vacancies that were unfilled, representing 16% of the posts available. Both histopathology and core psychiatry training had a greater proportion of posts unfilled (28% and 35%, respectively).

Some specialties complete recruitment after the first round, while others continue to recruit. In 2016, after further rounds of recruitment and the provision of some additional posts, the number of unfilled vacancies was reduced by 37% (from 693 to 436). HEE has said that further rounds of recruitment are planned for later in the year to fill remaining vacancies at core trainee year 1 (CT1) and specialist trainee year 1 (ST1) level.

Despite having 518 unfilled training vacancies in 2017, recruitment to general practice training was more successful this year than in 2016.

Both histopathology, with 28%, and core psychiatry, with 35%, training had a greater proportion of posts unfilled.

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Planning the next 10 steps

What was your earliest ambition?
To be an officer in the Parachute Regiment.

What was your best career move?
Going to Oxford to study medicine: it meant that I got to meet my wife. You can’t do much in life if your core relationships aren’t right.

What was the worst mistake in your career?
As a trainee, doing the right operation but not having all of the skills to solve the consequent problems. It made me realise that, in surgery, you can’t think about just the next step: you need to plan the next 10, as well as all alternatives.

How is your work-life balance?
It’s pretty tough! I keep weekends and holidays sacrosanct, and I try not to work late in the week. I’ve also finally allowed myself to miss deadlines and not worry.

How do you keep fit and healthy?
I run home during the week and paddleboard at weekends.

What single change would you like to see made to the NHS?
To make all discussions about its future apolitical. That’s the only way we can make a sensible 20 year plan for healthcare.

What do you wish that you had known when you were younger?
Not to worry too much about life choices. Things tend to work out in the end.

Do doctors get paid enough?
Compared with other healthcare and public sector workers, absolutely.

To whom would you most like to apologise?
To my wife and children, for spending too much time on my phone/computer and being away.

What single change has made the most difference in your field?
The realisation that technology will never trump physiology. In trauma, physiology is our most important ally and foe.

What new technology or development are you most looking forward to?
Real time sensing to help diagnostics and therapeutic management.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?
Spaghetti hoops with a dash of chilli sauce.

Where are or when were you happiest?
On the bench outside the pub in Runswick Bay, North Yorkshire, with a pint of Black Sheep Ale in my hand, looking out over the bay on a summer evening.

What personal ambition do you still have?
To live long enough to spoil my (future) grandchildren.

Summarise your personality in three words
Determined, loyal, fair.

Is the thought of retirement a dream or a nightmare?
Dream—part of me can’t wait.

If you weren’t in your present position what would you be doing instead?
Hopefully doing something fun and useful in a British army uniform.

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