

I'm missing out on training, what can I do?

Abi Rimmer hears of the steps that are open to you, if you believe you're not getting the opportunities that you need to further your experience and career



Make every clinical contact count

Tanaya Sarkhel, training programme director and consultant orthopaedic surgeon

“You are not alone. The past year has seen a dramatic, sustained reduction in surgical training. Talk with your educational supervisor—departments are now working towards the restoration of surgical services.

“Second, take a deep breath. Audit your logbook, compare it with the joint committee on surgical training guidance, and grab the data to demonstrate where you sit against annual review of competency progression expectations.

“Talk to your surgical tutor—there are 171 and almost every trust has one. Surgical tutors see what's happening to trainees both in the same speciality and across specialities, and together with the clinical tutor and director of medical education they can push for action.

“Squeeze the juice—make every clinical contact count. Every episode becomes a case discussion, examination, and a procedure with a reflective debrief at the end of the shift. Keep the whole portfolio on the boil, as well as the logbook.

“In November the surgical training bodies released a paper setting out a plan for training. This is our roadmap out of the training desert.

“We are embarking on a monumental surgical catch-up campaign. Surgical trainees have done extraordinary things, often outside a traditional surgical skill set, in the past 12 months. It's our job now to see you right and together we will get this done.”



Talk to your peers

Jo Szram, consultant respiratory physician and chair of the National Association of Clinical Tutors UK

“It's helpful to understand whether your peers are experiencing similar problems and to canvas for ideas of how to improve things—including examples from elsewhere. Any organisation that takes its mission seriously will be interested in the opinions of the doctors who rotate across the region and try to improve its educational offer.

“The postgraduate medical education team, normally led by a director of medical education and medical education manager, are a readily available resource to all trainees, especially if you don't feel comfortable raising the matter directly with your educational supervisor or faculty lead.

“In addition, you may feel more comfortable raising problems with your training programme director, who is responsible for all trainees across multiple sites, and can liaise with the faculty leads and the director of medical education to resolve the problem.

“Ensure you know who your trainee representative is and, if you don't have one, consider volunteering. It's an excellent way to develop leadership skills and understand more about how postgraduate medical education works.

“The bottom line is: identify the problem, try to solve it, and, if this doesn't work, bring some proposed solutions to your escalation pathway. Sounds like clinical practice, doesn't it?”



Raise the matter locally first

Abigail Nwaokolo, head of quality assurance at the General Medical Council

“A doctor's foundation training and speciality training years should be enriching, challenging, and varied.

“If a trainee believes they're missing out on opportunities, or if they have concerns about the quality of training, they should raise it locally first, following local procedures. They should do this as soon as possible so immediate steps can be taken to tackle the problem. Problems can also be reported to a doctor's educational supervisor or deanery or postgraduate training organisation.

“Exception reports will be sent to their educational supervisor, who will decide how to resolve the problem.

“It's understandable that some trainees may feel reluctant to raise concerns because of the possible impact on already overstretched educational supervisors and organisations, particularly during a pandemic. But organisations cannot plan their resources better without a full and accurate picture.

“Additionally, I'd encourage doctors in training and trainees alike to detail their workplace training experiences in the GMC's annual national training survey. This year's survey is open now and helps us check that training is of a high quality, in safe and effective clinical environments, and that trainers are well supported.”

Trainers and trainees can complete the GMC's national training survey here: www.gmc-uk.org/education/how-we-quality-assure/national-training-surveys

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