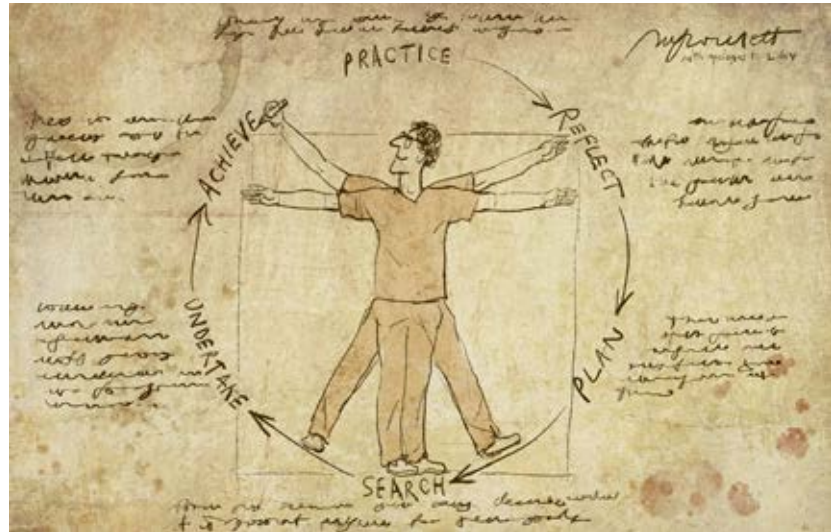


How do I prepare a personal development plan?

Three experts give **Abi Rimmer** their top tips on creating your individual career strategy, to make this essential task less daunting



Reflection drives learning

Fiona Tasker,
dermatology registrar,
London

“Any route to success must start with a plan. Making a personal development plan (PDP) will help you to recognise your educational needs as well as personal aspirations. It will also allow you to map out how to achieve these. There are three main elements:

“First, review your learning needs and make SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound—goals. When choosing these, try to select areas that interest you, ideally things you are passionate about as you’re more likely to commit to the tasks and enjoy achieving them. Don’t forget to add a date by which to achieve your objectives. If you struggle to identify areas to develop, talk to your supervisor or consider setting up a peer support group to promote reflective learning and goal planning.

“Next, outline learning activities that will match your objectives. For example, attending courses, conferences, meetings, completing e-learning modules, or learning from seniors or peers.

“Finally, consider how you will show that you have achieved your objectives. This could be through reflection, certificates from courses or e-learning modules, a logbook, or assessments or feedback.

“Planning and evaluating learning should be a continual process. After these three steps, reflect on how effective your PDP has been and whether there are areas that haven’t been tackled or haven’t worked. Reflection must drive learning, and your completed PDP should be a building block for future plans.”



Celebrate your achievements

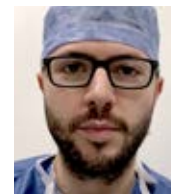
Mano Manoharan, consultant
perinatal psychiatrist at the
South London and Maudsley
NHS Trust

“A PDP is a dynamic and structured process of nurturing skills. It’s about reflecting on your current learning and performance, and developing plans for the future. It helps give you direction and is essential at all stages of a career.

“A core component is reflecting on your performance and identifying your strengths and areas where you need to improve. Once you’ve identified your learning needs you need to establish SMART objectives. Always give a clear time frame to achieve each objective and record the outcomes. Never forget to celebrate your achievements and remember you can carry on with the unfinished objectives next year.

“It can be useful to divide objectives into different areas, such as specialty, research, leadership, and personal objectives. For example, last year I included the courses I wanted to do in my career section. I put quality improvement projects, key performance indicators, and service development priorities in my service section. In my faculty section I put taking up a role in an executive committee and working on college related priorities. Finally, completing and reflecting on my assessments went into my leadership section, recruiting for projects in research, and completing the London marathon in my personal goal section.

“There’s no hard and fast rule and, as always, one size doesn’t fit all, but if planned effectively, PDPs can be a useful, career enhancing tool.”



Gain career direction

James Ashcroft,
academic foundation
programme doctor

“As physicians we put an immense amount of time and energy into our careers. This can often be undirected, however, and can leave gaps in our skill sets. A PDP is your individual strategy to direct your efforts in order to become a well rounded doctor, allowing you to achieve your career aspirations and improve the care you provide to your patients.

“The first step is reflecting on your practice and identifying your strengths and weaknesses. The GMC’s Good Medical Practice and Continuing Professional Development frameworks can guide you in your aims for excellence.

“Second, plan ways you could improve any gaps in your ability. These aims should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound.

“Third, look for opportunities to tackle your weaknesses through your department, colleagues, medical journals, conferences, college websites, and social media.

“Next, undertake these opportunities, which may be in the form of courses, e-learning, meetings, or positions in institutions. Consider the skills you are aiming to develop.

“Achieve through your efforts and document what you have learnt. A record of any certificates, prizes, or feedback can be incorporated into your portfolio.

“Finally, practise your newly gained skills and apply them in order to improve the care you give. Reflect on this, and begin again.”

[Cite this as: BMJ 2018;363:k4725](#)



Agnes Binagwaho is a Rwandan paediatrician with a mission to transform healthcare in the country of her birth. Brought up and trained in Belgium after her parents left Rwanda when she was 3, she returned in 1996, just two years after civil war and the mass slaughter of the Tutsi people had left Rwanda devastated. Her life has since been dedicated to improving health quality and access—first in HIV and then at Rwanda's Ministry of Health, where she served as permanent secretary and then as minister of health, from 2011 to 2016. She is now vice chancellor of the University of Global Health Equity in Kigali, which she cofounded. Through health sciences education she hopes to have a global impact on health.

BMJ CONFIDENTIAL

Agnes Binagwaho Humour, hope, and health

What was your earliest ambition?

Since I was a little girl I wanted to contribute to the alleviation of suffering.

What was your best career move?

One was moving from France to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide and deciding to stay and fight for vulnerable people. The other was joining a managerial team, which has allowed me to serve millions in my country and contribute to rebuilding a health system for them.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

Not tackling malnutrition correctly or early enough. It's a persistent challenge to help children affected by this preventable condition.

How is your work-life balance?

I prioritise working for people in need and surrounding myself with experts and colleagues who approach this work as I do: with humour and hope.

What do you wish that you had known when you were younger?

To enjoy every moment.

Do doctors get paid enough?

Not in the developing world—and there's even less incentive for doctors to provide care for rural poor people, as it's so weakly compensated worldwide.

Which living doctor do you most admire, and why?

Paul Farmer, for his deep commitment to repair the broken world.

What unheralded change has made the most difference in your field?

Increased awareness of the need for global solidarity to prioritise the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, with critical support provided through the Global Fund and Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance).

What new technology or development are you most looking forward to?

Innovations that enhance skill transfer and e-learning.

What book should every doctor read?

Reimagining Global Health by Paul Farmer, Arthur Kleinman, Jim Kim, and Matthew Basilio.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Good food.

What personal ambition do you still have?

To create a sustainable, lasting university devoted to global health equity.

What is your pet hate?

People who fail to imagine that change is possible.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

Chicons au gratin.

Is the thought of retirement a dream or a nightmare?

I'm living my retirement plan by working for things I believe in—and I love it.

If you weren't in your present position what would you be doing instead?

Taking care of little ones, through my role as a paediatrician.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2018;363:k4441