



Hampshire, UK

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;369:m2474

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2474>

Published: 29 June 2020

Improving training for surgeons of the future: the consultant thoracic surgeon

Consultant thoracic surgeon Sridhar Rathinam talks to **Francesca Robinson** about passing wisdom down the generations

Francesca Robinson

Sridhar Rathinam is passionate about supporting the next cohort of cardiothoracic surgeons. “If you don’t train the next generation of doctors,” he says, “your skills will die with you.”

In his role as training programme director for the East Midlands cardiothoracic training programme, he takes great satisfaction from seeing his trainees move on to become consultants and heads of services in other regions. “It’s like seeing your children take their first steps, get their first school award, or go to university,” he says.

Rathinam did his general surgical training in India and came to the UK on the British Council Fellowship scheme. He continued his cardiothoracic training and was appointed consultant thoracic surgeon in Leicester in 2009.

As a member of the cardiothoracic surgery specialty advisory committee he is involved in the assessment and quality assurance of surgical training. He is also a national selection panellist for trainee appointments in cardiothoracic surgery and is the education secretary of the Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery for Great Britain and Ireland (SCTS).

The specialty is small—there are only 40 units in the UK—and the training is competitive. Rathinam knows his trainees well and supports them with personal as well as professional matters.

He says many clinicians shaped and inspired him during his own training. Explaining why training is important to him, Rathinam cites what one of his mentors told him, “Learning is a four way process: you learn, you retain knowledge, and you become an expert—but you only become truly learned when you pass that wisdom on to the next person.”

He believes that the crowning achievement of his career to date is a portfolio of 12 structured courses that he developed in 2013 with a colleague in his then role as the SCTS national tutor for thoracic surgery.

At the time, cardiothoracic surgery training courses were fragmented and run by different institutions. Rathinam and his colleague decided to consolidate them into a single, simulation based programme that was closely linked to the curriculum and providing skills progression.

“These courses are the first of their kind in the world. This was our dream project, it is my pride and joy,” says Rathinam.

Nominated by Hazem Fallouh

“The best trainers vary—some are supportive, watch the trainee patiently, and share all their wisdom; some are inspiring because they are great at what they do and you want to be like them.

“Sridhar Rathinam has all these qualities. I owe him a lot. He was so supportive when I was at my lowest, that I decided to follow him as a role model when I became a trainer myself.”

Hazem Fallouh is a consultant thoracic surgeon, at University Hospital Birmingham

This interview was conducted in February. Since then much has changed. Sri would like to thank personally the thoracic team members in Glenfield Hospital for enabling delivery of essential cancer care and managing the covid-19 crisis, as well as supporting each other. A special thanks also to the University Hospitals of Leicester for providing free food, parking, and much more during these challenging times.

Nominate a role model: to nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, job title, and the reason for your nomination to arimmer@bmj.com.