Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: filling rota gaps and raising the morale of junior doctors

Dr Jimmy Li Voon Chong, consultant physician (diabetes and endocrinology) and clinical director for specialty medicine at Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (HHFT) outlines his reasons for joining the Future Hospital chief registrar scheme.

Background

I first heard about the Future Hospital Programme chief registrar pilot from our chief executive officer, Mary Edwards. I thought it would be a great opportunity for HHFT to be one of the first sites to join the scheme and contribute to the development of future clinical leaders.

I also thought this would help to address some of the significant issues currently facing HHFT, particularly junior doctor morale at the Basingstoke site. A range of factors have contributed to low morale among juniors, most noticeably rota gaps and excessive workload.

Local context

HHFT is the major provider of hospital services to the population of north and mid Hampshire and surrounding areas – approximately 600,000 people. The three hospitals – in Basingstoke, Winchester and Andover – provide a comprehensive range of acute services as well as being a tertiary referral centre for:
- colorectal, liver
- peritoneal carcinomatosis
- haemophilia
- pseudomyxoma surgery.

I explained the role to Dr Tahir Akbar, specialist registrar in gastroenterology and now in post as chief registrar, and he was very keen to get involved.

I thought being involved in the chief registrar scheme would help to address some of the significant issues currently facing our trust, particularly junior doctor morale.

- Dr Jimmy Li Voon Chong, consultant physician (diabetes and endocrinology) and clinical director for specialty medicine, Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Overcoming challenges: securing funding and identifying candidates

The consultant physicians at Basingstoke were initially reluctant to release one of their registrars for 2 days a week to undertake the duties of the chief registrar while we still had existing difficulties filling posts. The gastroenterology team is the only team in the trust with three specialist registrars. This advantage, coupled with Tahir being extremely keen to make the role work for our trust, allowed me to approach the local education training board (LETB). Dr Simon Plint, postgraduate dean of LETB Wessex, along with Dr Gerrard Phillips, deputy head of the school of medicine, gave me further clarification regarding funding and the feasibility of doing this pilot for our trainees.

The main challenge for us has been regarding the existing gaps in registrar rotas, which makes it difficult to release the chief registrar to work 2 days a week in this role. We have recruited an
additional three registrars (endocrinology, respiratory and cardiology) through the Medical Training Initiative programme for Basingstoke site to help address this.

Recruitment

We only had an informal interview as just one registrar was identified and released by their specialty team in order to take part in the pilot.

Tahir is undertaking his role as an out-of-programme experience, with his salary all funded by HHFT. He carries out his chief registrar role for 2 days per week and does clinical work in his remaining time (3 days), including the acute take. His training programme for gastroenterology is being extended by 6 months.

Tahir is already making a difference in resolving some of the issues we have. I hope he will find this experience useful and that it will give him insight and enthusiasm to be become a future clinical leader at consultant level.