the columns

correspondence

Career progression – use of the trainee logbook

As senior house officer trainees approach the end of their training and prepare to apply for higher specialist training, they become more concerned with the 'publications' section on the job application forms for specialist registrars. By then they have either already published something in a journal or are desperately trying to do so. Recently, with the increased competition for higher specialist training posts, it has become an unwritten rule that one is unlikely to get short listed if the 'publications' section is left blank. The consensus is that trainees at senior house officer level are competing in terms of how many published letters or articles they have written/co-written.

We do not question the value of published work in the selection process, nor do we doubt its relevance to career progression. However, we wonder if the field of vision has become unhelpfully narrow. We wonder whether, in parallel with the ongoing changes in the training of psychiatrists, the assessment of suitability for career progression should shift from cross-sectional to longitudinal assessments of trainees' performance. An excellent tool for assessment, which trainers and trainees have long used, is the College's trainee's logbook (http://www. rcpsych.ac.uk/PDF/LogBook.pdf). It includes almost all that is essential for a comprehensive evaluation of a trainee. The two sections of training goals and supervisors' feedback are particularly useful for acquiring an overall view of career development.

Psychiatric training in the UK is constantly evolving. In August 2007, the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board will supersede the Specialist Training Authority and the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice. It is hoped that the selection of trainees for higher specialist training will involve a more-balanced structured assessment rather than a tick-box format. However, the assimilation of the current trainees into the new system is yet to be clarified. Advertising for specialist registrar posts will cease after August 2007. Guidelines for their point of entry into the new training scheme are not very specific. One worry is that the unfortunate ones will be forced to settle for non-training career grade posts. A way of allaying such anxiety about job prospects in higher training is to allow the use of relevant documentation compiled by trainees throughout their training. The logbook is a very useful tool for writing and updating CVs and for the purpose of interviews. We believe it has greater potential as a genuine record of experience and a reflection of the aptitude and suitability of a trainee for a job.

*Ahmed Alwazeer   Senior House Officer in Psychiatry, St Michael's Hospital, South Warwickshire PCT, Warwick CV34 5BW, email: alwazeer@doctors.org.uk, **Waleed Ahmed**   Senior House Officer in Psychiatry, St Michael's Hospital, South Warwickshire PCT

Impact of a waiting list initiative of a child and family out-patient mental health team

This initiative sought to reduce the waiting list and to improve the triaging process of an out-patient multidisciplinary team based at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh. The team consists of 6.5 whole-time equivalent clinicians and receives 250 referrals of children aged under 14 each year. All referrals (n=66) on the waiting list were offered an initial assessment during a 2-week period in July 2005. Interdisciplinary pairs were formed and each pair was assigned a clinic session comprising two 1-h assessments. A weekly meeting was held to discuss all cases and to prioritise and allocate according to need and the skills required to manage the problems.

Sixty-six patients were offered appointments and 46 of these attended. Thirty-seven patients (56%) were allocated to clinicians for further management, 21 (32%) cases were closed and 8 patients (12%) remained on the waiting list for further management. After 6 months, there were 33 on the waiting list, with an average waiting time of 5 weeks, which was down from 4.5 months.

The initiative was an effective way of assessing and allocating patients in a more appropriate and timely fashion, and resulted in a considerable improvement in the service offered. It also resulted in the establishment of regular 'initial assessment clinics'. The experience had the effect of motivating the team, encouraging the sharing of ideas and generating action.

Anna Beaglehole   Senior House Officer in Psychiatry,   ***Fiona Forbes**   Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Child and Family Mental Health Service, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh EH9 1LL, email: Fiona.Forbes@lpct.scot.nhs.uk

Research day for specialist registrars

Okolo & Ogundipe (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, July 2006, **30**, 275–277) have raised important issues regarding the research day for specialist registrars. Although it has been considered appropriate for the research day to be used for high-quality audits, teaching/training and post-graduate courses in addition to field research, our deanery expects concrete proof of publications and/or research funding, as part of the Record of In-Training Assessment. We constantly find ourselves having to explain the gap between achievements and expectations.

Some trainees are clearly not interested in research and it is not ideal to force disinterested people to undertake research projects. For trainees that are interested in research, the opportunities are not readily available. Guidance and advice are poor, unless trainees are able to tap into an ongoing project. The alternative is for the trainee to spend all their training trying to understand the system, which has been my experience.

More thought needs to go into the use of the research day and if trainees are expected to produce results they need the resources to enable them to do this. The programme director needs to be involved in tailoring the research day to the interests of the individual trainee.

I hope that the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board takes this into consideration before the new system