

Guidelines and Chips: food for thought in supporting trainees.

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Background:

Specialist Trainees are under numerous pressures contributing to burnout.

- social isolation from repeated moves during training,
- significant clinical commitments
- the pressure of studying for professional exams.
- prioritisation of clinical service provision over teaching commitments due to significant consultant shortages along with an increasing workload.

In our trust:

Within Gloucestershire, there are 2 hospitals, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and Cheltenham General, 6 miles apart.

Doctors in the department work across both sites. We have 2-3 Specialist Trainees doing 6-12 month attachments, along with 2-3 Speciality Doctors. We also have an Internal Medicine Trainee and a Foundation doctor, whose presence is patchy due to on call commitments.

It is therefore difficult to foster a team environment and to deliver regular teaching.

What we did:

A consultant with educational interests hosted a fortnightly evening teaching session within her own home. Attendance was voluntary as it occurred outside of working hours.

It was structured as a social event, with all trainees bringing a dish and the teaching was structured around dinner.

The trainees took turns to present a guideline and a seminal paper, after which a relevant essay question for part 1 FRCPath was set.

Discussion:

Benefits:

-It has provided a relaxed social environment aiding team bonding and increasing morale. The majority of the dinner talk is not on work related matters and allows the team members to be viewed as individuals.

-It has helped to develop critical appraisal and presentation skills across the group. The discussion of guidelines on a regular basis, without time pressure or frequent work interruptions, helps trainees to be familiar with the concepts for use in practice.

-Various presentation styles have been employed catering to different learning styles and allowing for experimentation with different teaching methods in a non-threatening environment, with immediate feedback.

-Evidence of continuing professional development (CPD) for specialty doctors.

-The essay practice for those preparing for exams reinforces the teaching done that week and provides useful essay feedback.

Conclusion:

Whilst this model does require the commitment of the team to a regular meeting outside of working hours, the benefits both socially and educationally are significant and of benefit to all.