Clinical DPhil Paths study

Joint article with UCL, published in BMJ Open, 29th August 2017

The clinical academic workforce of the future: a cross-sectional study of factors influencing career decision-making among clinical PhD students at two research-intensive UK universities
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Summary of findings
We examined the demographic and training characteristics, career intentions and career preparedness of clinical DPhil/PhD students enrolled at Oxford and UCL in 2015-16. We also looked at what influences them as they plan their future careers.

Our study suggests that:
1) The career progression of postdoctoral clinical academics could be enhanced by relaxing eligibility criteria for clinical lecturer (CL) posts – the first postdoctoral posts in the Integrated Academic Training pathway (www.oucags.ox.ac.uk/cac/pathway). These posts are often only open to doctors still in training, whereas we found that many doctoral clinicians have completed training (18%), or nearly done so (25%), and will not currently gain the opportunity the post offers to develop as independent researchers.

2) Supporting clinical academic careers should include focused career support for clinical doctoral students. Indeed, although 50% of doctoral clinicians intend to pursue a clinical academic career and 62% are at least moderately likely to seek a CL, we found that 51% have little or no knowledge about CL posts.

3) Encouraging doctors to have multiple predoctoral research experiences may improve the number of those wanting a clinical academic career, since those wanting this career path tended to have the most predoctoral medical research experience (p=.0005 for our test of association).

4) Identifying ways to create more senior posts would also be helpful. Indeed, one of the main reasons cited for not pursuing a clinical academic career was the small number of senior academic appointments available.

Establishing a stable pipeline of clinical academics, who can make fundamental contributions to realising improvements in healthcare, continues to be a concern in the UK and beyond. So, our study’s insights will be of interest to both UK and international audiences looking to promote the clinical research workforce.

Read our paper: http://bit.ly/2weCeYC
About the Clinical DPhil Paths study: https://www.oucags.ox.ac.uk/cdp