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Clinical Academic Graduate School

Clinical DPhil Paths study

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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>