

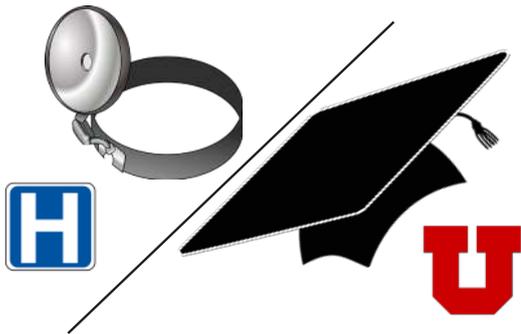
CLAHRC BITE

Developing the next generation of clinical academics

February 2016

Postdoctoral career development could be helped by mentoring, improved work environment, and better access to funding

Academic medicine faces significant challenges in attracting and retaining medically qualified, clinical researchers. In a BMJ editorial CLAHRC researchers set out their blueprint for improving pathways to a clinical academic career.



Clinical Academics are in a unique position, straddling the worlds of clinical practice and research

CLAHRC researchers identified key factors influencing postdoctoral career progression within academic medicine for doctors. These will also be relevant to other health professionals developing a clinical academic career:

Mentorship - doctors who experience supportive mentorship and positive role models tend to report greater career satisfaction and confidence

Work environment - a workplace that is inclusive, respectful, and attentive to the needs of early career clinical academics

Access to funding - those in debt or unable to obtain research funding may be unable to advance their academic careers

Intrinsic motivation - junior clinical academics who value research highly pursue this career path even if career success is uncertain

Academic medicine faces significant challenges in attracting and retaining medically qualified, clinical researchers. Clinician academics are health professionals involved concurrently in clinical practice and research. Within practice they develop a research-led care environment for patients and challenge existing practice. Within academia they bring front-line NHS perspective to focus research on improving patient outcomes and health systems.

In 2005 the UK government established the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Integrated Academic Training Programme for Doctors and Dentists, a training pathway to generate a “pipeline” of world class future clinical academics. It encourages junior doctors with an interest in research to advance from an academic clinical fellowship, and after completion of a PhD, to clinical lectureship. An evaluation of postdoctoral career progression, focusing on the experiences of medics currently enrolled in a PhD program and those who have recently submitted their PhD will shortly be undertaken by CLAHRC researchers in conjunction with University College London’s Academic Careers Office. In advance of this CLAHRC researchers examined existing evidence on clinical academic career progression.

Summary

CLAHRC researchers examined the experience of doctors pursuing a clinical academic career using i) career tracking data for PhD graduates from major funding bodies to see if they were subsequently active in research, and ii) a recent Medical Research Council review of career paths and progression for early career clinical academics.

Mentoring - supportive mentors protect and encourage trainees' personal and career development and, consequentially, promote both greater independence of thought within research and a desire to remain within clinical academia.

Environment - junior clinical academics express a desire to work in an environment that is inclusive, respectful, and attentive to their needs in an institution that is committed to their career progression.

Funding - difficulties in acquiring research grants feature strongly in early career researchers' accounts. Those who experience financial pressure, such as debt, and are unable to obtain research funding may be unable to advance their academic careers.

Intrinsic motivation - trainees' internal motivation and reasoning for becoming a researcher may influence their career path. Intrinsically motivated junior clinical academics who perceive research to be highly valuable pursue it even if career success is uncertain. These junior academics find their role intellectually stimulating and discovery exciting.

Developing future research leaders - the CLAHRC/HENCEL Fellowship

To increase NHS research capacity and develop research leaders of the future, CLAHRC North Thames' Academy has launched an exciting Fellowship scheme with Health Education North Central London (HENCEL). The scheme is aimed at nurses, midwives and Allied Health Professionals with some research experience who want to take their clinical academic career to the next level. It offers opportunities for front-line NHS staff to develop research skills on a one year secondment to an academic environment, attending conferences and contributing to academic papers. They also act as research ambassadors at their "home" Trust whilst working towards applying for a major research grant.

References

Clinical academics' postdoctoral career development
Veronica Ranieri, Helen Barratt, Naomi Fulop, Geraint Rees
BMJ 2015; 351 :h6945

Editorial: www.bmj.com/content/351/bmj.h6945

A Cross-Funder Review of Early-Career Clinical Academics: Enablers and Barriers to Progression

Led by Medical Research Council, prepared by IFF Research

www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/review-of-early-career-clinical-academics



Useful links

CLAHRC North Thames/HENCEL Fellowship scheme

www.clahrc-norththames.nihr.ac.uk/hencelclahrc-fellowship-programme

NIHR Integrated Academic Training Programme for Doctors and Dentists

www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/integrated-academic-training-programme.htm

UCL School of Life and Medical Sciences (SLMS) Academic Careers Office

www.ucl.ac.uk/slms/aco/cat/homepage



About NIHR CLAHRC North Thames

A university, NHS, local authority partnership to conduct and then promptly implement the most important world leading research of direct relevance to patients and the public.

www.clahrc-norththames.nihr.ac.uk/



Follow CLAHRC North Thames @CLAHRC_N_Thames



Disclaimer: This research was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health. View more BITEs at www.clahrcpp.co.uk