Research Exposure for UK Junior Paediatric Trainees

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# Introduction

The importance of clinical research is well recognised internationally(1), and is a priority of the UK’s Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)([2](#_ENREF_1)). The RCPCH provides a generic training curriculum outlining mandatory research competencies for those in the first 1–3 years of paediatric training (ST1-3s) (table 1).

Table 1: RCPCH curriculum for research in paediatrics for ST1-3 trainees

|  |
| --- |
| **An understanding of the need for an ethical and rigorous approach to research in paediatrics** |
| Understand their responsibilities to conduct research with honesty and integrity, seeking ethical approval where appropriate and safeguarding the interests of patients. |
| Begin to understand basic concepts in research design and methodology including the difference types of research studies |
| Understand the difference between research and audit |
| Understand the steps involved in planning a research project |
| Understand when to use simple statistical tests and their interpretation |
| Begin to develop critical appraisal skills and to apply to their reading of the literature, including systematic reviews of their own teaching and the teaching of others |

It is unclear how these skills map onto aspirations of junior trainees, or research requirements in future job applications.

# Aim

To determine exposure to research amongst UK junior paediatric trainees.

# Methods

Paediatric trainees in seven UK deaneries were invited to complete an online survey exploring research experience in their training. Research requirements for ‘Grid’ (subspecialist training) applications and consultant paediatrician posts were reviewed and considered in the context of the survey results.

# Results

Fifty-two trainees responded, with an even distribution across the three training years.

Eighty-nine percent of trainees considered themselves to have had minimal or no clinical research experience during their paediatric training. Although fifty-eight percent of trainees were aware of ‘research in paediatrics’ competencies in the curriculum, only eight percent knew what the competencies were.

Trainees considered research experience an important part of training but found opportunities limited(figure 1). Sixty-nine percent of trainees didn’t know who to ask for advice and support. Reported barriers to research included research opportunities being aimed at more senior trainees (therefore excluding junior trainees); an emphasis on service provision; opportunities relying on “word of mouth”; and inflexible training structures making it challenging to take time out for research.

Figure 1: Results – Trainees responding as ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ to the questions described

See attached figure.

Research competencies and experience featured highly in both Grid and consultant person specifications, most listing at least some aspects as essential criteria.

Nationally, reports such as “Turning the tide”([3](#_ENREF_2)) have started addressing changes that are needed to improve research training. Locally solutions need to be implemented, with dissemination of best practice nationally. Solutions could include regional/multiregional research training days, encouraging Good Clinical Practice training earlier in training, and identifying research support leads in each hospital to guide trainees and share opportunities.

# Conclusion

Junior paediatric trainees consider research important, but report little experience, leaving limited training time to gain the competencies required for Grid and consultant positions.

# Acknowledgements

Dr Hanna Lythgoe and Dr Victoria Price contributed equally to the manuscript

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