

The PRHO Year: CHMS response to Professor Michael Goldacre's Paper

CHMS welcomes good studies into how well Medical Schools are preparing future doctors, such as that by Michael Goldacre and colleagues in the BMJ on 9 May 2003 entitled "Pre-registration House Officers' views on whether their experience at Medical School prepared them well for their jobs: national questionnaire survey". This study, of the 23 UK Medical Schools producing graduates in 1999 and 2000, sought the views of doctors who graduated in these two years on how well they felt they had been prepared by their Medical Schools for their jobs in the year immediately following graduation, the pre-registration House Officer (PRHO) year. The survey showed that there were marked differences between Medical Schools with less than 20% of graduates of one School feeling well prepared and 73% of graduates at another feeling well prepared.

Our comments on these results are as follows:

- Not all of the Medical Schools surveyed were producing graduates from their new integrated curricula by 1999 and 2000. The Medical School with the highest "well prepared" response rate was producing graduates from its new curriculum at this time which suggests that changes that were being implemented at the time of this study are likely to be improving the preparedness of doctors for their PRHO year.
- As Michael Goldacre acknowledges in his paper it is not known whether the lack of preparedness relates to fundamental deficiencies or minor deficiencies in practical skills or knowledge which can be relatively easily overcome.
- We know that free text responses in Professor Goldacre's questionnaire, not reported in the paper, included very few comments about lack of preparedness, but more concerns about learning opportunities for PRHOs, service/training balance, working hours, pay and other matters.
- Part of the lack of preparedness could be an issue for the hospitals in which PRHOs work. These have the responsibility for providing induction and support for new House Officers.
- The PRHO year, though very important, is a very small proportion of a medical career. The more important question to answer is whether doctors feel that they have been well prepared for their careers in medicine by their Medical School experience.
- CHMS encourages sharing of positive and negative experiences between Medical Schools. Schools which have done well in this particular survey are happy to share information on their curricula and how they prepare students for the PRHO year with any other interested School.

- This survey deals only with the perceptions of PRHOs themselves, not with the perceptions of their supervisors, other colleagues, or patients. These will not necessarily be the same.
- We look forward to Professor Goldacre's next national survey on this topic which we know is planned, which will give him the opportunity to probe a bit further and to see if things have changed. We would anticipate as more new integrated curricula come on line that more PRHOs will feel well prepared.
- CHMS reaffirms that the role of Medical Schools is to provide new doctors with the knowledge and skills to be capable PRHOs, and with the self-learning abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to be effective doctors throughout their careers.

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