

Modernising Scientific Careers- Genetics Pilot Training Programme

December 2009

Welcome to the first edition of the Modernising Scientific Careers Genetics Pilot newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to up-date you on the progress of the national Genetics Pilot which is being hosted by NHS West Midlands.

Coming up in this issue:

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- Academic Programme
- Assessment
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- National Healthcare Science School of Genetics
- External Evaluation
- Workforce Analysis
- Communication Strategy
- Train the trainers
- Pathology Rotations
- Dosimetry update

We would welcome your feedback and comments on this newsletter and if you have any questions or queries about the Genetics Pilot then you can get in touch with us at genetics@westmidlands.nhs.uk

Healthcare Practitioner and Healthcare Scientist Trainees.

All trainees are now in post and based at Newcastle, Liverpool, Sheffield and Leeds, Nottingham, Birmingham, Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol, London GOS, Northwick Park and Guys and Thomas's.

The trainees are all progressing very well through their training modules and some of the scientists have already completed some experiential clinical learning. Trainees attend a variety of clinics such as paediatrics, genetic counseling, clinical genetics, and reproductive medicine clinics.

Chris Buxton, a STP trainee working at Bristol Genetics Laboratory, reflects on his visit to a paediatrics clinic in the context of a special needs school for children with severe learning disabilities.

“Laboratory genetic diagnosis is used as one of the many diagnostic tools available to the paediatrician to identify the case of a child’s learning difficulty; however, diagnosis is often made on a clinical basis alone. Parents of children affected by proven or possible genetic disorders attended the clinic for a variety of different reasons, not necessarily to ‘identify’ the genetic condition per se. Such reasons included:

- **The need to reduce the impact of the clinical symptoms on the family:**

A teenage girl with ASD had become regularly violent. The 'diagnosis' was of less relevance to her mother than her wish to ameliorate her daughter's behaviour in light of the danger that she posed to herself and other family members.

- **Identification of a diagnosis to enable access to services:**

A 14 year old girl with autism was making good progress in the school's autistic unit, but needed a specific diagnosis of autism to allow continued provision of teaching within the autistic unit (it would be okay to stay in other classes at the school otherwise). There are approximately 100 places available in the county in special autistic units, but approximately 500 children with ASD who may be competing for those places.

- **To seek inappropriate reassurance:**

Parental aspirations were not always altered when a diagnosis had been made. The parent of a young girl with learning disabilities saw it as a disease from which his daughter would recover and then return to mainstream schooling. He did not appreciate the life-long management issues.

- **To be seen to be doing as much as possible:**

A wide range exists between those parents who are well-informed, and those that are well-meaning but uninformed. Clinics such as these have a key role in helping the uninformed parent to gain a better understanding of their child's condition, and prevent inappropriate and harmful decisions, e.g. selling all they have and moving to the US for a perceived better service.

Academic Programme

The University of Nottingham have delivered two residential courses. The first in September was an introduction to Healthcare Science and the NHS and was attended by both PTPs and STPs. The second course was in November for the STP trainees and focused on genetics of learning disorders.

Nottingham University are providing a part time MSc that is the academic part of the STP training programme. The STP trainees are also completing problem based learning (PBL) exercises remotely to facilitate their learning and support the modules. Anticipated completion date for the first two modules is identified as January 2010.

The University and the National Healthcare Science School of Genetics are now working very closely to confirm the future programme including assessment and curriculum content. A curriculum advisory group is being established to support this process

Assessment

An online assessment tool has been commissioned to develop and deliver an online assessment tool that will support the continuous professional development of the trainees and will enable their progress to be effectively monitored and evaluated. The online tool contains the assessment tools used throughout the training including Case Based Discussion (CBD), Multi Source Feedback (MSF), Directly Observed Practice (DOPS) and the Competency log. There is also space to include additional information to provide a comprehensive portfolio.

Work is continuing to ensure that this system is operational and available for use by January 2010 and will be accompanied by operational guidance and a user manual to support implementation.

The University of Nottingham are undertaking Academic Assessment for STP.

CSO Conference

The STP and PTP trainees were invited to attend the annual CSO conference on 24th and 25th November 2009. This was an interactive and informative event providing information on the future of the NHS, the role of healthcare scientists in delivering high quality and innovative services, an update on progress for MSC and some discussions around the challenges of workforce development.

Two of the trainees, Carolyn Stephenson from Oxford Regional Genetics laboratory and Rebecca Franses from Northeast/Northwest London Regional Genetics laboratories were interviewed by Vivienne Parry where they discussed their reasons for joining the pilot and their future aspirations. This was a really interesting feature and the National School would like to thank Carolyn and Rebecca for their contribution to the event.

“It was really inspiring to see how healthcare scientists have made such a big impact on patient care within the NHS, and motivated me to try and achieve this level of success within my career.” Rebecca Franses

The conference also held an evening awards event and we are delighted to be able to announce that Val Davison, professional advisor to the Genetics pilot was awarded the CSO Leadership Award. This was in recognition for all of the inspirational work Val has undertaken in the development of the genetics curriculum for MSC and ongoing support and development of the National School and wider MSC programme.



From L-R: Vivienne Parry, Carolyn Stephenson and Rebecca Franses.



Val Davison (centre) with her CSO Leadership Award presented by Professor Sue Hill, Chief Scientific Officer (left) and Sian Thomas, Director NHS Employers (right)

National Healthcare Science School of Genetics

The National Healthcare Science School of Genetics has been established to oversee the delivery of the training programme and is hosted by NHS West Midlands. The School is responsible for the monitoring, reporting and performance management of the work based and academic elements of the training programme. The school consists of Head of School, programme lead, business manager with additional support from NHS West Midlands, Heads of Genetics departments.

A National Healthcare Science School of Genetics Board will be created to support the school with the inaugural meeting anticipated for February 2010. This board will meet on a quarterly basis and will make strategic decisions around the ongoing development of the pilot and feed into the main MSC programme via the Medical Education England Delivery Board.

Work is currently ongoing for the School to set up the infrastructure required to provide guidance on a variety of operational and quality assurance processes. A draft policy is due to be in place for early 2010.

External Evaluation

The pilot training programme is being evaluated by the University of Warwick. The focus for the evaluation includes;

- Assessment of the processes for establishment of the programme and its administration
- Assessment of service change and impact on patient care
- Impact on organisations (for example costs and benefits for organisations involved in the implementation)
- Issues for employers and education providers produced by the pilot structure
- Specify if changes to the training content are identified
- Review the workforce implications
- Consider the relationship of the pilot (Genetics) to new STP programmes and the discipline interaction
- Regular reports and updates are being provided to the Project Lead for Genetics and reporting arrangements will be to the National School Board and Expert Reference Group and the main MSC programme via the Curriculum Development Group.

Workforce Analysis

Collinson Grant Healthcare have been engaged to undertake workforce analysis of the Genetics workforce and Genetics departments across England have now been contacted to take part in the research. The aim of the work is to look at the shape of the current workforce and needs for the future.

Communications Strategy

The Department of Health communications team is leading the national communication strategy for the pilot with engagement from NHS West Midlands Communications team who will be leading the regional communications.

The strategy is being developed and will be available early 2010.

Train the trainers

A programme to train the training leads in each department has been implemented to ensure that departments are able to deliver the work based training programme to the required specification and standards. All departments have been issued with detailed training programmes with clear competencies and assessment tools to ensure the trainees are able to progress through the programme appropriately.

To date, two events have been delivered to provide general information on the pilot and MSC as well as an interactive session to introduce the assessment tools. Future events are planned for January and throughout 2010 as additional support and training needs are identified.

In late January there will be a meeting which will cover the logistics of the on-line assessment tool and will look at systems for performance management.

Pathology Rotations

The National School is working with Dr Ian Barnes, National Pathology Clinical Lead to identify the forward programme for the STP trainees to undertake rotations through a number of different pathology disciplines. Placements will be delivered on a local basis and pathology leads will be invited to a national meeting to discuss the programme in the New Year.

Dosimetry Project

A pilot programme within MSC is planned with PTP trainees in dosimetry to begin in April 2010. Dosimetrists operate within the radiotherapy physics section of the hospital radiotherapy department and undertake a range of roles including beam planning, immobilisation and shielding, brachytherapy, quality assurance and dose measurement.