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PMETB surveys reveal trainee doctors' satisfaction on the increase but demand for flexible training is unmet

The Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) this week launches summary analysis reports for two major national surveys, one of medical trainees and the other of the trainers that train them. The surveys form an essential part of the work PMETB does to quality assure postgraduate medical education and training in the UK.

Improvements for this year's surveys work have helped achieve higher response rates and wider access to the results:

- 33,000 submissions for the second annual National Survey of Trainees, conducted in collaboration with the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans (COPMeD)
- 10,000 submissions for the inaugural National Survey of Trainers
- Findings can be viewed via a new web-reporting tool:
<http://reports.pmetb.org.uk>

Improved trainee satisfaction

Trainees report higher rates of Overall Satisfaction with their training this year, with the national score for this climbing from 75.97 in 2006 to 78.17 in 2007.

Flexible training

Almost 22 per cent of female trainees report that they want to train flexibly (i.e. less than full-time, or with time gaps allowed) but are not doing so, compared to just over seven percent of male trainees. The proportion of those training flexibly varies by specialty group, with the surgical specialty group having the lowest proportion. Interestingly, when comparing flexible trainees to full-time trainees, there are no differences on the Medical Error, Overall Satisfaction and Clinical Supervision scores. PMETB Chairman, Professor Peter Rubin said: *"There is clearly a big demand for flexible training and those planning the delivery of training should consider this information with interest."*

Foundation doctors

For the first time, Foundation doctors have been included in the trainees' survey and results show that this cohort is broadly satisfied with their training and indeed compares favourably to others, with higher scores for Induction and Educational Supervision than post-Foundation trainees. That said, nearly half of the Foundation doctors surveyed reported having felt forced to cope with clinical problems beyond their competence or experience in the last

month. Furthermore, only 40 per cent reported that they found structured feedback assessments helpful, suggesting there is a significant proportion which has yet to be convinced of their value.

Professor Derek Gallen, Postgraduate Dean for Wales and National Director of the UK Foundation Programme Office said: *"We are pleased that the general level of satisfaction among foundation doctors is high, although there are clearly areas that need to be addressed. One of the aims of the Foundation Programme is to ensure that there is a good level of supervision for foundation doctors and to allow them to learn in a safe environment. The other area of concern, the assessment tools, are already under review and the findings from this survey will be part of that review. We welcome this survey and will use the information gathered to help us improve this relatively new programme for future years."*

Trainers' survey

PMETB has been pleased with the responses to this first National Survey of Trainers, but can see there is much more work to do on improving the response rate for next year. This survey demonstrates a significant difference in approach between GP Trainers and Consultants, with the former showing some very positive perceptions by comparison:

- 81 per cent of GPs against 38 per cent of Consultants have been trained for training in the last three years
- 65 per cent of GPs have been appraised for their training within the last year, against 31 per cent of Consultants

Patricia Le Rolland, PMETB's Director of Quality added: *"Results this year remind us what an important role surveys' evidence has to play in the quality assurance of training. The surveys give trainees and trainers the chance to comment directly to the Board on potential areas for concern, which, identified at this early stage, can be resolved. Those with responsibility for the development, design and delivery of assessments, should also consider the findings on assessments with real interest and take action."*

Professor Elisabeth Paice, former Chair of COPMeD, Dean Director for London Deanery and Chair of the National Trainee Survey Working Group commented: *"The trainees' survey has for the second year, provided key data which may be used by deaneries in improving the quality of the training delivered within their area. It is also thanks to the deaneries' help with the administration of the surveys that we have seen such successful response rates. To ensure its continued success, it is vital that deaneries continue to engage with this work and to this end, Deans should contact PMETB with any suggestions for further improving the utility of the work."*

To read the survey analysis reports in full, or find out more about PMETB's national surveys work, visit: [PMETB: Surveys](#)

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Notes to Editors:

- PMETB is an independent statutory body, responsible for overseeing and promoting the development of postgraduate medical education and training for all specialties, including general practice, across the UK.

- It assumed its statutory powers on 30 September 2005 taking over the responsibilities of the Specialist Training Authority of the Medical Royal Colleges (STA) and the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice (JCPTGP).
- The vision that PMETB has set itself is to achieve excellence in postgraduate medical education, training, assessment and accreditation throughout the UK to improve the knowledge, skills and experience of doctors and the health and healthcare of patients and the public.
- In response to the outcomes of Sir John Tooke's MMC Inquiry, the Department of Health has announced that PMETB and the GMC should be merged from 2010. This will provide a single seamless regulatory structure for medical education from medical school through to postgraduate education and training and continuous learning until retirement.
- To find out more about PMETB, visit www.pmetb.org.uk

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