The Review

Registrar to GP: a transition

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Liz Walton

Samuel Fox House, Northern General Hospital,
Herries Road, Sheffield, S5 7AU, UK.

E-mail: e.walton@sheffield.ac.uk

more closely, perhaps breaking down some of castle ramparts, but that will be another story.

The team at the tower led by the Professor–Gatekeeper has been a great source of support, stimulation, and fun. The Apprentice has made links with other Researcher–Gatekeepers in their ivory towers and has learnt much from their worlds. Now the apprentice is gathering more data to submit her work for a PhD, whether she is successful or not, well that again will be another story.

Liz Walton,

In Practice Fellow, Samuel Fox House, Northern
General Hospital, Sheffield.

Provenance

Freely submitted; not externally peer reviewed.

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp11X613205

REFERENCES

1. Mathers N, Hodgkin P. The Gatekeeper and the Wizard: a fairy tale. *BMJ* 1989; **298**(6667): 172–174.
2. Mathers N, Usherwood T. The gatekeeper and the wizard revisited. *BMJ* 1992; **304**(6832): 969–971.
3. Mathers N, Howe A, Field S. Clinical research by GPs in their own practices. *Br J Gen Pract* 2009; **59**(561): 296–297.

Nervous excitement. That was how I felt the night before my life as a ‘real GP’ began. 3 August 2010 was my final day as a registrar and I remember counting down the last days of ‘training’ fluctuating between feelings of fear and the happy realisation that what I had worked towards for 10 years was imminent.

Of course ‘training’ had not finished and I was actually embarking upon the steepest learning curve since I started as a junior doctor back in 2005. The transition has proved to be challenging, rewarding, and at times slightly unnerving, and I look back on it with a quiet sense of pride.

Day 1. I turn up in my new suit (to one of the surgeries where I had been ‘the trainee’ just a day before) and before I have a chance to brew a coffee, the first call comes from reception. A simple request — one which I’ve frequently handled over the last year — but it feels different. I deal with it and carry on as normal but later that night I question myself. Was I correct? Should I have discussed it with another GP? At this point the realisation of being an independent GP dawned for the first time.

Over the next few months I grew more comfortable with my new role through fixed locum sessions at inner-city Birmingham practices. The biggest change in mindset was becoming the ‘go-to’ doctor for the registrar who took my place. Overnight I became the doctor who was asked to ‘look at this rash’ — I found myself being much more decisive than when I saw the same rash just a month before.

I began to realise that being a GP is as much about confidence than knowledge or skill; living with uncertainty was becoming an important part of making my working life bearable. Initially I went from worrying about patients on the (now more precious) weekends to being slightly blasé and blindly feeling that all was fine; by now I hope I am approaching a steady medium between the two.

My registrar year had been enjoyable and thorough. I was taught about concepts such as ‘time being a cure’ and ‘inability to cure the worried well’. These seemed alien to me after coming from the ‘other side’ of hospital medicine. I had to ‘unlearn’ thoughts that were drilled into me during my medical upbringing and ‘re-train’ myself to GP mode. I still far from fully understand the power of these concepts but I am starting to see them evolve in front of me, beginning to see the

truth in these age-old methods of primary care. I knew of these in my registrar year no doubt, but with other things to occupy my mind (CSA exam, e-portfolio to name just two), I somehow missed their relevance.

While being a registrar felt predominantly about ticking boxes and getting to the end in one piece, being a GP has enabled me to expand my horizons. With recent NHS developments I gained an insight to commissioning by representing a consortium in our PCT audiology tendering process. Aiming to become a GP trainer, I also co-founded a company which successfully runs MRCGP CSA exam preparation courses for registrars. To help balance these other aspects of career development I took up yoga; I feel its outward simplicity but inward depth of meaning and intricacies draw strong parallels with general practice, allowing me to maintain a sense of perspective in my new working life.

Finally, I return to fear. Making the leap into independence is a huge step for a registrar. No-one changes into a perfect GP overnight; I was exactly the same doctor on 3 August 2010 as the next day. My mode of thinking has however changed and continues to evolve. Of course I still approach senior colleagues with moles that I’m unsure about and unusual blood results. I will never be the GP who feels 100% confident about everything I face; I would never want to be that GP. I look back at my transition from trainee to GP as hesitant and at times uneasy, but an important period that has sewn the seeds for the next 30 years of my life — I hope the nervous excitement of over a year ago stays with me every step of the way.

Aman Arora,

GP, Warwick Road Medical Practice, Birmingham.

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp11X613214

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Aman Arora

58 Hemisphere, 31 The Boulevard, Edgbaston,
B5 7SE, UK.

E-mail: aman999arora@yahoo.co.uk