



Royal College
of Physicians

Medical Training Initiative: A reciprocal success

The Medical Training Initiative (MTI) is a mutually beneficial scheme that provides trainee doctors from all over the world with the opportunity to work and train in the UK and take the expertise they have gained back to their home countries, while giving trusts a high-quality, longer-term alternative to using locums to fill rota gaps.

On the basis of these significant mutual benefits, the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) recommends that the government should:

- > increase the number of Tier 5 visas available for the MTI scheme to 2,000 a year
- > extend access to the scheme, or establish a similar scheme, for non-priority countries, particularly those such as Australia that have similar training programmes to the UK and more doctors than training places. This should be supported by an additional 1,000 Tier 5 visas a year

Background

The MTI scheme has been running for 9 years, and the RCP scheme is the largest of all UK college programmes, with more than 300 international medical graduates currently working in the UK. The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges is the national visa sponsor for the scheme.

The national scheme allows for a small number of doctors to enter the UK from overseas for a maximum of 24 months, on a Tier 5 Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) visa. They can benefit from training and development opportunities in the NHS before returning to their home countries.

The scheme is open to all doctors from outside the European Union; however, applications from Department for International Development (DfID) priority countries and World Bank low income (LI) and lower middle income (LMI) countries are prioritised following a change to the eligibility criteria in April 2017.

Impact

During 2017/18 the Royal College of Physicians undertook an analysis of the participant experience and outcomes for those participants who had come through the RCP scheme. A total of 159 programme members engaged with the analysis.

We asked participants a range of questions about their experiences before, during and after the scheme. Participants were clear that the MTI scheme had had a positive impact on their medical career and that the scheme significantly enhances the likelihood of participants returning to consultant jobs in their home countries. 93% of participants rated the scheme positively and 94% of participants would recommend the scheme.

Up to

2,000

international medical graduates currently working in the UK



Participants had a range of reasons for wanting to train in the UK. 79% of respondents said their top reason was to 'learn clinical skills and gain knowledge', 43% to 'gain exposure to research, audit and clinical governance', and 42% to 'learn new procedural skills'.

Before joining the scheme participants had an average of 10.6 years of medical practice experience. 23% held consultant posts, 69% held senior registrar or equivalent posts, 7% held junior registrar posts and 1% held other posts.

After the scheme 71% were in consultant roles, 16% were in senior registrar roles and 3% held junior registrar roles, with 10% holding other roles.

Participants reported being involved in a diverse range of activities on their return home. One participant set up a gastroenterology unit which became a regional referral centre. Another participant set up small branch respiratory clinics in small hospitals in Sri Lanka, while another participant led the formation of a clinical infection group in Nigeria.

The scheme has clear benefits for all involved, with UK NHS trusts benefiting from additional highly qualified doctors, the participants developing their medical careers, and the participants' home countries benefiting from the experience of the doctors on their return.

Applicants' home countries

In the 3 years to April 2018, the top 10 countries were:



Doctors on the scheme come from

58 

different countries outside the European Union.

Before the scheme

23%

were in consultant roles



After the scheme

71%

were in consultant roles



Top reasons for taking part in the scheme:



79%

to learn clinical skills and gain knowledge

43%

to gain exposure to research, audit and clinical governance



42%

to learn new procedural skills



‘One participant set up a gastroenterology unit which became a regional referral centre’

Regions of placement

Programme participants undertake their placements across the UK. The highest proportion undertake their placement in London, followed by the West Midlands and the East of England. Over the last 3 years the proportion of placements in London has fallen, with more placements being undertaken outside of the capital to the benefit of the wider health system.

