

Unsatisfactory Level of Dermatology Undergraduate Education in Newly Qualified Irish Doctors.

Sir,

On completion of medical training doctors are often ill equipped to diagnose and manage skin disorders. This is a result of the poor provision of training at an undergraduate level. Each year approximately 54% of the UK population are affected by skin conditions and 24% of GP visits relate to dermatological conditions¹. A poor knowledge of dermatology can compromise the ability to diagnose and treat these patients in both hospitals and the community. This leads to additional pressure on specialist care waiting lists.

An online questionnaire detailing doctors' undergraduate dermatology teaching experience in Ireland and confidence in their knowledge of basic dermatology was sent to newly qualified doctors via electronic mail. A second online questionnaire assessing content, delivery methods, and assessment approaches in dermatology education was sent to the medical education staff of six individual Irish medical schools. University representatives were also asked to comment using free text on difficulties encountered in providing dermatology education and suggestions they had to improve current dermatology education.

Of 100 newly qualified doctors contacted, 48 responded from various Irish university hospitals. Only 10% felt their current knowledge of dermatology was sufficient while 43% of respondents did not find their undergraduate dermatology education satisfactory. Over half of respondents had as little as two to five lectures during their time as an undergraduate. Eighty percent had no clinical placement or rotation in a dermatology specialist centre. A third of respondents had their dermatology teaching from a general practitioner only. Just under a quarter of respondents had their dermatology teaching from a dermatology specialist registrar. Only 17% felt comfortable in recognising a drug rash, 35% of respondents were not comfortable in recognising melanoma and 30% were not confident in using dermatology terminology to describe rashes. Of the six university medical schools, there were four responses. One of the four reported no input from dermatology specialists in developing their medical school curriculum. Seventy five percent of medical schools acknowledged that medical students did not currently receive sufficient dermatology teaching. Only two of four medical schools included dermatology questions in their final year medical examinations.

The content, delivery and assessment of undergraduate dermatology education in Irish medical schools is currently lacking. Given postgraduate education opportunities are scarce, dermatology teaching at an undergraduate level should be optimized to equip doctors with the necessary skills to diagnose and

manage common dermatological conditions.

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Conflicts Of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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