Correspondence

Is the AIM curriculum, for higher specialty training, fit for purpose? – response.

Sir

I read the article, 'Is the AIM curriculum, for higher specialty training, fit for purpose'[1] with interest.

However, I disagree with the author on a number of points. First, a curriculum is 'everything that happens in relation to an educational programme',[2] not a document setting out intentions and expectations.

Issues with the quality of training in medical specialties are often addressed by re-writing documents. But the root causes of problems are often to do with the quality of posts 'on the ground' (e.g. timetable, experience and learning opportunities) and the quality of supervision and feedback (non-existent in some cases).

In my surveys of trainees' timetables, curriculum requirements are often not met. When asked about good supervision and feedback, this appears to be the exception rather than the rule, and this is backed up by national surveys.[3] In a recent survey of regional training days specifically for AIM trainees, only three regions held 10 training days a year and several had none.[4]

Imagine you are going on a long journey by boat. There are detailed schematics of the boat, and a map laid out for its destination. There is a requirement that you get a bed and three meals a day for the duration of your journey. Everything looks fine on paper when the boat inspectors look over things. You make it to the other side safely. That says nothing about the quality of your journey at all.

We want all our trainees to be excellent physicians. Acute Medicine faces a real challenge in improving the quality of its trainees' experience and learning opportunities, supervision and feedback. Some posts are good already. But we have a lot of work to do to ensure high standards are consistently met.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Cooper
MBChB FAcadMEd FRCPE FRACP
Consultant Physician & Hon Clinical Associate Professor
Derby Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Email: nicola.cooper18@nhs.net

Conflict of interest?
NC is a Training Programme Director, ordinary Consultant member on SAM's Education Committee, and Secretary of the AIM Specialty Certificate Exam Board.

References

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2. Cooper N and Melville CR. Putting a curriculum into practice. In: Cooper N & Forrest K [Eds]. *Essential Guide to Educational Supervision*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009
3. General Medical Council. National Trainee Survey 2011. GMC, London, 2011
4. Cooper N, Farrington C & Barrows G. Survey of AIM training days in the UK. Poster. Society of Acute Medicine international conference. Birmingham, 2017

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