

The Academy of Medical Sciences National mentoring and outreach scheme

The Academy of Medical Sciences is committed to promoting careers in the biomedical sciences and supporting young researchers. Through the policy and outreach work of the Academy's Careers Committees we play a central role in the development of sustainable training programmes and career pathways in order to attract and develop the most promising biomedical scientists.

Outlined below is the Academy's expanding portfolio of national mentoring and outreach initiatives. These schemes are designed to support and provide guidance to medical trainees as they embark on the academic pathway and progress to become independent clinical academics.

1. Inspiring medical students to undertake research

Two schemes are currently underway to promote academic medicine as an attractive career pathway to medical students and Foundation Year students.

Medical Research Society/Academy of Medical Sciences Clinical Research Champions - The aim is to establish a national network of Clinical Research Champions to act as recognised regional careers advisors for academic trainees. We currently have a network of six Champions, selected from the Academy Fellowship, in place across the UK. The aim is to inspire medical students and promote academic medicine as an attractive career pathway to those who haven't already made the move into academia. Champions host regional meetings and events and produce literature encouraging younger doctors to engage with clinical academics already in training and senior academics who can share their knowledge and experiences. The Champions are also encouraged to report national training issues and mentoring needs back to the Academy and the MRS.

Academy of Medical Sciences Visiting Lecturer Programme - Academy Fellows present inspirational lectures to both medical students and postgraduate researchers on their scientific achievements and experiences in order to motivate young doctors to consider a future in clinical academic medicine. Following a successful pilot at Peninsula Medical School, this scheme has been rolled out to Queen's University Belfast, Cardiff University, Dundee University, Hull York Medical School, Leeds University, Newcastle University and The University of East Anglia.

2. Supporting trainees throughout the clinical academic pathway

The Academy has run a highly regarded Mentoring Scheme for Clinician Scientists Fellows for the past five years, supported by the Department of Health and the National Institute for Health Research. In 2006 a successful evaluation recognised the quality and relevance of the programme and resulted in a new contract and support for an expanded national scheme, which was launched in Autumn 2007.

National Mentoring and Outreach Scheme - We are delighted that our unique programme now provides one-to-one mentoring by Academy Fellows to both Clinical Lecturers and Clinician Scientists.

The new scheme also includes a range of outreach activities for pre-doctoral trainees, such as the Academic Clinical Fellows, Clinical Training Fellows, Academic Foundation Fellows and MB PhD students. Tailored regional workshops and events, which link to local mentoring schemes, provide opportunities for trainees to network with senior colleagues and peers while also providing a forum for knowledge transfer

and debate on issues around training and professional development. A fundamental part of these events is to provide the opportunity for both mentors and mentees to further develop their understanding of mentoring and how to make it work in practice. Support materials are offered to assist trainees in their personal and professional development.

'Buddy' or Peer Development Groups – This is a new initiative, designed as a way to offer further mentoring support to the more junior clinical academic grades. Small groups of 5-6 pre-doctoral clinical academics from within a region and/or speciality are brought together to form informal buddy groups that are led by a more senior clinical academic such as a Clinician Scientist. The purpose of these groups is to discuss career development, share ideas, experiences and contacts and also to help reduce isolation. Buddy group leaders (Clinician Scientists and Clinical Lecturers) are encouraged to attend our Mentor Development Workshops to develop their mentorship skills, thus providing a unique training opportunity for Clinician Scientists and Clinical Lecturers whilst also supporting the more junior trainees.

Clinician Scientist Fellowship Scheme - The Academy manages a prestigious Clinician Scientist Fellowship Scheme on behalf of external funding bodies. A number of our Clinician Scientists are finishing their Fellowships and have been so successful that the Health Foundation partnered us in a new round of Fellowships in 2008.

Starter Grants Scheme for Clinical Lecturers - The Academy of Medical Sciences and the Wellcome Trust have launched this new four year £5m grants scheme to support research active Clinical Lecturers with the costs of research consumables. The scheme will provide modest 'start up' funds of up to £30,000 (up to two years) to enable Clinical Lecturers to pursue their research work, gather preliminary data and further strengthen their applications for longer-term fellowships and funding.

UK/Middle East Exchange Fellowships - In partnership with the Daniel Turnberg Trust Fund, the Academy has launched a new UK/Middle East Travel Fellowships Scheme which provides opportunities to gain further research experience, learn new techniques and to foster collaboration between scientists. Grants are awarded to early and mid career medical researcher and bioscientists from the UK to spend time in laboratories and hospitals in Middle Eastern countries and for researchers in those countries to come to the UK.

3. Dissemination of information and resources

Academic Careers Website – www.academicmedicine.ac.uk

In response to requests from academic trainees, we have developed a portal for information and career opportunities for undergraduates, postgraduates, post doctoral researchers and anyone considering a career in biomedical science. The website includes (i) information on training and funding opportunities (ii) case studies on how to progress your career in the biomedical sciences and (iii) interviews with top scientists discussing their career path and choices. This shall be further developed to ensure that it continues to provide up-to-date, key information on academic training opportunities.

Events and Information Bulletin - A quarterly newsletter is disseminated to all academics registered on the Academy's mentoring and outreach scheme database. This provides information about forthcoming Academy and non-Academy events as well as updates on activities in the world of clinical academia and medical science.

If you would like any further information on these schemes or would like to register, please contact the Academy's Mentoring and Outreach Officer, Ms Sally Lukins:

sally.lukins@acmedsci.ac.uk