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Foundation year 1 and the career planning process:

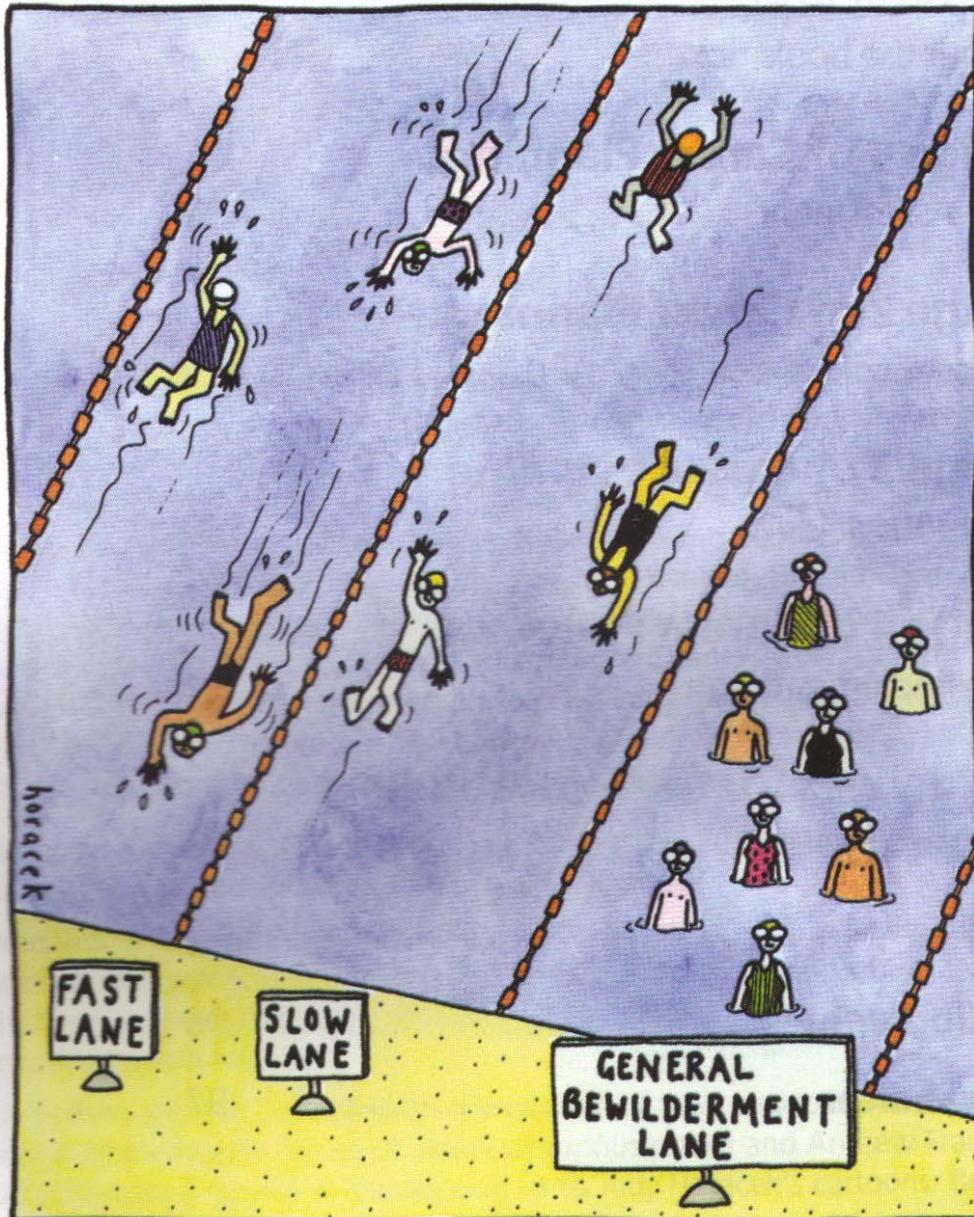
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1) Introduction:

As you are now effectively in your first medical job since completing medical school, it is very important that you start adopting a clear framework to plan your career. For many of you, you will have been thinking about this for several years and will be well on the way to progressing through the Foundation Programme and onto specialty training. For others you may feel somewhat daunted about what lies ahead and perhaps are less clear as to which direction you will take. The following handout aims to help you come to a well informed and realistic decision about you and your career options and offer some help and guidance as you plan your medical career.

Where ever you feel you are in the career planning process at the moment please take time to read the following to either confirm that your plans are robust and realistic or to start you on the road to career planning.

Career Planning – which lane are you in?



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2) The Importance of Career Planning:

Changes brought about by Modernising Medical Careers mean you will now have to make decisions earlier than was previously the case about your career. Near the start of Foundation Year 2 applications open for specialty training and you will be applying for your specialty programme job after

completing the Foundation Programme. You will of course be very busy with your foundation training so it is important to plan carefully for this time to enable you to be best placed and prepared.

By starting to think NOW (if you have not already started) about your career you will be putting yourself in a stronger position. You need to carry out a careful consideration of the options open to you to enable you to come to a well informed and realistic decision and also to have other plans that will act as a back up or contingency for you. This is very important indeed.

It also shows on application forms and throughout the interview process if you have carried out a solid career planning process as you will be able to clearly articulate why you have chosen that particular specialty and you will genuinely be able to talk about it at interview.

Research has also shown that having an awareness of career planning is valued by Medical Professionals. In a telephone survey of 3000 UK graduate doctors 73% used web based resources to plan their career and 50% received advice while at medical school. (*Survey of UK graduate doctors: January 2006 – A research report for GMC*)

3) A Career Planning Framework:

To aid you with your career planning it is useful to work to a framework. This gives structure to the process and will also highlight to you that certain steps need to be undertaken before others. Section 4 of this handout will look in more detail at a 4 stage career planning framework. By having a career planning framework in mind, this will also aid you in your discussions with your Educational Supervisor around career planning. In a large-scale research study of work-based career discussions, it was found that if the providers and recipients of career support shared a common framework, the recipients found the discussion more useful (*Hirsh et al, 2001*)

It is important to systematically consider the 4 stages of career planning and not to miss out any of the stages. You may feel that you are clear in what direction you wish your career to take however it is wise to check these thoughts by carrying out the 4 stages suggested.

4) 4 Stage model of Career Planning:

There follows an overview of a 4 stage model of career planning and this model is widely used in Higher Education careers services. The National Health Careers Website – www.healthcareers.nhs.uk is another resource that adopts the 4 stage career planning model and again you are urged to review this site

4 Stage model:



Stage 1:~ Self Assessment

Individuals are encouraged to carry out an honest self appraisal.

You should be considering:

- i) Work values – essentially what do you want out of your career. You should consider aspects including place of work, variety, likely salary, status etc.
- ii) Skills and interests – you will need to carry out an honest self reflection here to identify what your skills and interests are and how you can use these to plan your career.
- iii) Stresses and strains – It is important when planning your career that you have an awareness of certain areas that you find difficult or particularly stressful. All careers will have stresses and strains as well as pros and cons. Good career planning acknowledges this and once these aspects are identified you can look toward selecting pathways that minimise the effects of these for you.

Stage 2:~ Career Exploration

Once you have completed a thorough self-assessment you should have started to find out what makes you tick and what aspects of a career would be best suited to your own likes, dislikes, values etc. Armed with this information you need to start exploring your options. You will find that there maybe several careers that are open to you and this is fine. This will give you broader options and a plan B, C or even D when it comes to applying to speciality.

You may have already started researching and exploring the various career paths that exist prior to carrying out stage 1. However after completing a thorough self-assessment you will be better equipped to do so. There are over 60 specialities to choose from so you should still be keeping an open mind and finding out as much as you can about those specialties that chime most with your skills, interest, values etc (Self-assessment). The National Health Careers website (www.healthcareers.nhs.uk) contains detailed information on over 60 specialties and would be a good starting point for exploring the differing options.

Do also take the opportunity to discuss your career options with your Educational Supervisor and Clinical Supervisor and to take on board feedback that you have been given. Does your career aim realistically accord with the feedback you have been receiving?

There are other aspects to consider as well when exploring career options:

- What are the person specifications for the specialties of interest? Do you match the essential criteria? – details of person specifications can be found on the MMC website at www.mmc.nhs.uk
- How competitive are the specialties that you are interested in? There is some degree of variance between how many vacancies are available and how many people apply. Some very popular specialties will attract many more applicants than posts available. Having an understanding of this early on in Foundation will help you formulate a realistic career back up plan. You can find details of competition ratios via the specialty pages on www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk or alternatively through the MMC website at www.mmc.nhs.uk
- NHS service needs. The landscape of the NHS is constantly changing. Where there were lots of opportunities in the past may now not have such scope for employment. It is important to have an awareness of workforce statistics and there are sections on these on www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk on the specialty pages. For example there will be a marked increase in the need for GP's in the coming years with over 50% of all vacancies in the future being for GP.
- One of the best ways to get a real understanding of what it would be like to work in a specialty is to get first hand experience of it. You should be able to arrange a taster in a specialty that you may not have had the opportunity to experience as part of your rotations. You should discuss this with your Educational Supervisor to see what you need to do to arrange a taster and also how to get the most out of your taster.
- Networking is also another great way to carry out career research. Try to build up your network of contacts at the hospital. Talk to those involved in specialties that you are interested in even if informally over

a coffee. People generally like talking about what they do for a living and should be willing to give you a bit of time if you are genuinely interested and have prepared some thoughts or questions to ask. Try to talk to a broad range of people not just consultants. Talk to different levels of trainees as well as the allied health professionals who work in that specialty. Find out as much as you can, including the bits that they do not like.

Stage 3:~ Decision making:

At this stage you should now have some clearer ideas about which specialties most suit you as a person and have carried out a career exploration to clarify your thoughts about your options. It now comes down to making some decisions about your career. Obviously you do not want to narrowly go for one route in a blinkered manner or you are not building in contingency planning to your strategy. You should however now be clearer on which specialties you are interested in and will have to make a decision.

The National Health Careers Website – www.healthcarrers.nhs.uk also has further information on decision making.

Stage 4:~ Plan implementation:

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The final stage of the process is applying for your specialties of interest. The more careful thought you have given to stages 1, 2 and 3 it will assist you with completing:

- Application forms
- Preparing your CV
- Interviews
- Assessment centres
- Portfolios

This handout is a summary of some of the things you should be considering during your Foundation Year 1. You should start thinking systematically about your career now (if you have not already started to do so) and this will pay dividends in the future. It will also make you a strong candidate when applying

for jobs and will help you move into a worthwhile and rewarding career in the future.

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5) Resources:

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk – This site has a tools and resources section with links to other medical information, advice and guidance sites.

www.mmc.nhs.uk – Modernising Medical Careers

References:

Hirsh, W., Jackson, C and Kidd, J.M. (2001). *Straight Talking: Effective Career Discussions at Work*. Cambridge: National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC)

GfK NOP Social Research (2006). *Survey of UK graduate doctors: January 2006 – A research report for GMC*

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