Update on the work of the MET Unit

December 2010
Message from the Director of MET

Better trained doctors provide better care to patients. The HSE’s Medical Education and Training (MET) Unit, along with its many partners, has made considerable progress in the three years since its establishment, on the enhancement of training provision and structures.

In this update, we provide a brief overview of some of our current areas of work.

We will shortly be launching the MET Hub on hseland.ie, which will provide a resource to all junior doctors and those who provide and facilitate their training and on-going professional development, with regular updates on policies, projects and reports.

Details on how to obtain more information on any of the areas covered in this update are provided throughout.

Prof. Gerry Bury
Director, Medical Education & Training, HSE

About the HSE’s Medical Education & Training Unit

The HSE’s Medical Education & Training Unit was established in 2007 in response to the role outlined for the HSE in the Health Act 2004 and, in particular, the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.

Government policy on undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and training is set out in the “Fottrell” and “Buttimer” Reports, respectively.1

In response, the HSE produced its Medical Education, Training and Research Strategy in October 20072, which led to:

• The establishment of the MET Unit
• The appointment of a Director of MET
• The establishment of a MET Advisory Group, with external representation.

The MET Unit is part of the Leadership, Education and Development function in the HSE’s HR Directorate. The Unit works within the HSE’s strategy for Education, Training and Research and Government policy for medical education and training.

The role of the MET Unit is simple:

• To implement relevant provisions of the Health Act 2004 and the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 and
• To support and contribute to Government and HSE goals for medical training, at undergraduate, intern, specialist training and continuing professional development levels.

This update outlines some of the current areas being progressed by the MET Unit.

---

Overview of Medical Training in Ireland

Medical Training in Ireland takes place through five principal stages: Medical Student, Intern, Initial Specialist Training, Higher Specialist Training and Continuing Professional Development.

Undergraduate & graduate entry medical education is provided by six Medical Schools which provide undergraduate and graduate entry medical degrees: NUIG, RCSI, UCD, TCD, UL and UCC. Graduate entry courses are of 4 years’ duration. Direct entry courses can be of 5 or 6 year duration.

Intern Training is provided by Intern Training Networks, each of which is based around a Medical School. The intern year is of one year’s duration. Successful completion of the intern year leads to the award of the Certificate of Experience.

Initial and Higher Specialist Training programmes are provided by recognised Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies.

Initial Specialist Training Programmes include basic specialist training programmes and registrar training programmes and are available in nine specialties.

Higher Specialist Training programmes are provided in 45 specialty and sub-specialty areas. Completion of higher specialist training leads to the award of a Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST), allowing the holder to apply to the Medical Council for Specialist Registration.

Doctors at all levels are required to be registered on the relevant division of the Register of Medical Practitioners maintained by the Medical Council in order to practise.

Under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, the HSE is required to submit to the Department of Health & Children an annual assessment of the number and type of medical training positions required by the Health Service.

For the training year July 2010/July 2011, the following medical training places were proposed by the HSE:
- Intern: 520 approx.
- Initial Specialist Training: 1,800 approx.
- Higher Specialist Training: 1,300 approx.

Total medical training posts 2010/11: 3,620
Supporting Undergraduate Medical Education

The HSE has a legislative responsibility to facilitate the training of medical students. It is estimated that in their undergraduate and graduate entry medical programmes, medical students spend approximately half of their time on HSE and HSE-funded clinical sites on clinical placements.

There are currently 5,000 approx. medical students in Irish medical schools, with places having increased over recent years in line with Government policy. In 2010, the HSE and the Universities agreed a Concord governing student clinical placements on clinical sites. A Medical Education Liaison Group has been established by the MET Unit and will work closely with the Deans of the Medical Schools, clinicians and HSE management to address student clinical placements at national level. Regional groups will also be established.

The HSE also supports undergraduate medical training through the establishment of 24 senior Academic Clinician posts in the medical schools, which are jointly funded by the Higher Education Authority and the HSE.

For more information contact: Richard Bruton, richard.bruton@hse.ie / 01 6352050

Reforming & Supporting Intern Training

The intern year is the first year of postgraduate medical training. Graduates of Medical School are required to complete an internship in order to achieve a Certificate of Experience which enables the holder to be eligible for Trainee Specialist Division or General Division registration and for employment at the grade of SHO.

There are currently 520 intern training posts in over 30 acute hospitals and five general practices. Intern training is for a minimum of 12 months.

Previously, intern training was provided on an ad-hoc basis with little national coordination or consistency.

In 2008, the National Committee on Medical Education and Training published its report on intern training, with recommendations for significant change. The HSE established an Implementation Group with representation from external stakeholders.

The Group recently finalised its Interim Implementation Report

Principal reforms undertaken in 2010 include:

- The establishment of six Intern Training Networks, based around Medical Schools, and the appointment of Intern Network Coordinators
- The development of a national Intern Training Programme and formal service level agreements between the HSE and the Medical Schools to support intern training
- The re-distribution of intern posts
- An increase in the number of intern posts from 508 to 521
- Expansion of intern training into new specialty areas, particularly General Practice
- A national application and matching process

Details on the 2011 recruitment campaign for interns are available in the HSE’s Guide to Application and Appointment to Intern Training 2011.

For more information contact: Ciara Mellett, Business Manager, MET Unit, ciara.mellett@hse.ie / 01 6352642

---

Supporting Specialist Medical Training

Specialist medical training takes place in two stages:

(i) **initial specialist training** (incorporating what is known as “basic specialist training” and Registrar training) and

(ii) **higher specialist training**, which leads to the award of CCST and eligibility for specialist registration with the Medical Council.

Specialist training is delivered by 13 training bodies which are recognised by the Medical Council for this purpose. Examples include the Royal College of Surgeons and the College of Anaesthetists.

Basic specialist training (BST) programmes are provided in the specialties of:

- anaesthesia
- medicine
- paediatrics
- psychiatry
- obstetrics & gynaecology

Most IST programmes are 2-3 years in duration. There are approximately 1,800 training posts at this level, with doctors being employed at Senior House Officer and Registrar grades.

Higher specialist training is provided in a range of specialties:

- Anaesthesia
- General Practice
- Medicine (16 sub-specialties, such as cardiology, neurology and endocrinology)
- Obstetrics & Gynaecology
- Ophthalmology
- Paediatrics
- Pathology (5 sub-specialties such as haematology)
- Psychiatry (4 sub-specialties such as child & adolescent psychiatry)
- Surgery (10 sub-specialties, such as cardiothoracic, orthopaedic and paediatric surgery)
- Public Health Medicine
- Occupational Health Medicine
- Radiology & Radiation Oncology
- Emergency Medicine

More information on initial and higher specialist training programmes is available from the website of the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies, at www.medicaltraining.ie

The HSE has put in place formal **Service Level Agreements with the recognised training bodies** to support the delivery of specialist medical training.

In addition, the HSE has collaborated with training bodies to support **medical education initiatives** in the development of postgraduate medical training. Examples include e-logbooks and on-line learning, competence based training and generic training modules.

The importance of continually developing and expanding specialist training to meet service needs has been recognised by the HSE and a number of developments are underway in collaboration with the relevant training bodies.

In 2009, the number of **training places in general practice** was expanded. An initial specialist training programme in emergency medicine is under development. Other areas where training programmes are not currently available are being considered, such as clinical genetics and oral & maxillofacial surgery.

*For more information contact: Mary-Jo Biggs, Business Manager, MET Unit, maryjo.biggs1@hse.ie / 01 6352237*
Supporting Continuing Professional Development

Under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, all doctors are required to participate in professional development schemes. This requirement takes effect from May 2011.

Doctors who are taking part in formal training programmes organised by approved training bodies are deemed to be meeting the Medical Council’s requirements for professional competence assurance.

Discussions have commenced between the HSE and postgraduate medical training bodies to develop Professional Development Programmes for junior doctors who are not in training programmes. Further details will be available when these discussions have been progressed.

For more information contact: Mary-Jo Biggs, Business Manager, MET Unit, maryjo.biggs1@hse.ie / 01 6352237

Targeting the Best Clinical Care: Dr. Richard Steevens’ Scholarship

The Dr. Richard Steevens Scholarship is awarded annually to Specialist / Senior Registrars with strong track records in achievement. The Scholarship supports doctors to train in centres of excellence abroad in novel or sub-specialist areas of medicine and patient care which are limited or unavailable in Ireland and to bring the skills gained back to the Irish health service.

The Scholarship was established by the HSE in 2007 and scholarships have been awarded to sixteen doctors since then. A number of past recipients have been appointed to consultant posts in Ireland.

Highlights from the inaugural Dr. Richard Steevens Scholarship Symposium on December 8th 2010 will be available shortly on www.hseland.ie.

This Scholarship programme is supported through targeted investment funding from Government arising from the Buttimer Report.

For more information contact: Ciara Mellett, Business Manager, MET Unit, ciara.mellett@hse.ie / 01 6352642

Targeting Research: National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme

The HSE and Health Research Board jointly established the National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme in 2009. The programme supports Specialist/Senior Registrars to enter an integrated training pathway for clinical training leading to CCST and research leading to the award of a PhD. Previously, medical trainees have had to pause their clinical training in order to undertake research.

Six awards have been made to date: four awards in 2009 to trainees in the specialties of anaesthesia, orthopaedic surgery, infectious diseases and endocrinology and two awards in 2010 to trainees in anaesthesia and nephrology. It is hoped to make more awards in 2011 under this programme.

This Fellowship programme is supported through targeted investment funding from Government arising from the Buttimer Report and is managed and funded jointly by the HSE and the Health Research Board.

For more information contact: Ciara Mellett, Business Manager, MET Unit, ciara.mellett@hse.ie / 01 6352642
**Some Immediate Priorities for 2011**

- The development of an initial specialist training programme in **Emergency Medicine**
- Continued expansion in **GP training** places
- The roll-out of the national **NCHD database**
- The continued reform of the **intern year**
- The development of a national approach to **clinical skills training**

---

**MET Online: Medical & Dental Training Hub**

The MET Unit is collaborating with HSE Learning and Development (“HSELaND”) to develop a hub for medical education and training. This hub will provide information on the work of the MET Unit, updates on policies and scholarships and will be a resource available to all engaged in and involved in medical education and training in Ireland. The Hub will be available in early 2011.

To access the Medical & Dental Training Hub:

- Go to [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie)
- Register for access (this only takes a few moments and is free of charge)
- Click into the MET Hub

---

**Contact the MET Unit**

Medical Education & Training Unit  
Health Service Executive  
Room 1.24  
Dr. Steevens’ Hospital  
Dublin 8  
Ireland  

Aonad Oideachais & Oiliúna Leighis  
Feidhmíneacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte  
Seomra 1.24  
Ospidéal an Dr. Steevens  
Baile Átha Cliath 8  
Éire  

E: met@hse.ie  
T: + 353 1 6352892  
F: + 353 1 6352898  

**MET Publications:**  
[www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/etr](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/etr)  

**Coming Soon:** MET Hub on [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie)