Welcome to YOUR Newsletter!

This is the first issue of what I hope will become a regular bulletin to keep all SAS doctors in the Oxford Deanery informed of opportunities relevant to their career development. We really need your views and comments: please tell us what you need and how you think we can help your continuing medical education and professional development. And also, please let us know what you think of this Newsletter - what should it contain? How often should it appear? How should it get to you?

The Story So Far

By now most of you will be aware that in the latter part of 2008 the Department of Health made available to the English Deaneries a sum of £12 million, to help support the career development and continued professional education of Staff Grades and Associate Specialists, as well as those in the new Specialty Doctor grade. In the Oxford Deanery we have extended this support to include those holding appointments as Clinical Assistant and Hospital Practitioner.

NESC (NHS Education South Central) has received funding of £0.5 million, divided equally between the Wessex and Oxford Deaneries. Our strategy in Oxford has been in the first instance to appoint an Associate Tutor in each of the major Trusts to oversee this project at a local level, and to be the first point of contact for SAS doctors who wish to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by this new funding. Money has been devolved to each of the major Trusts (Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals, Buckinghamshire Hospitals, Milton Keynes, Royal Berkshire, Heatherwood and Wexham Park, and Oxford and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Trust) to support these activities. The amount works out at around £500 per SAS doctor, which includes a small amount to cover administration costs (around 10%).

Funding to support SAS doctors in the smaller Trusts (at the same rate as above) has been devolved to the nearby larger Trusts, as there are economies of scale in administering the services this initiative hopes to provide.

Who's who in all this?

John Lourie - Associate Postgraduate Dean, Oxford Deanery Lead for SAS doctors' educational support project. Contact: ilourie@oxford-pgmde.co.uk

Linda Day - Project Officer. Contact: Linda.Day@mkhospital.nhs.uk; copy also to: lin140268@hotmail.com
Andrew Blyth - Clinical Tutor for SAS doctors, Royal Berkshire Hospital (including Berkshire Healthcare West). Contact: Andrew.blyth@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Denise Tritton - Associate Tutor for SAS doctors, Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals (including Oxfordshire PCT). Contact: denise.tritton@orh.nhs.uk

Hugh Series - Tutor for SAS Doctors, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Trust (including Ridgeway Partnership). Contact: Hugh.Series@obmh.nhs.uk

Govindan Thirumamanivannan - Associate Tutor for SAS doctors, Buckinghamshire Hospitals. Contact: thiru.mamanivannan@buckshosp.nhs.uk

Shafiul Chowdhury - Associate Tutor for SAS doctors, Milton Keynes Hospital (including Milton Keynes PCT). Contact shaful.chowdhury@mkhospital.nhs.uk

Pampa Saarkar - Associate Tutor for SAS doctors, Wexham Park and Heatherwood Hospitals, (including Berkshire Healthcare East and Berkshire PCT). Contact: pampa.saarkar@hwph-tr.nhs.uk

Why is this being done?

For almost as long as anyone can remember, doctors in the "non-consultant career grades" have had a poor deal as far as access to professional support and help with career development, mentoring, and continuing medical education is concerned. The Government seems to have taken this on board, and, albeit belatedly, decided to recognise the huge contribution of SAS grade doctors to the NHS. The £12 million (which we are assured is recurring) provided for promoting CME/CPD for SAS doctors in England is of course coming at a time of major change in the contract, and the introduction of the Specialty Doctor grade.

If you have not already done so, I would recommend you have a look at the Department of Health’s document “Employing and Supporting Specialty Doctors” (available via www.nhsemployers.org/publications) which gives a good idea of what resources are proposed.

What support is available now?

Funds have already been allocated for the 2008/9 financial year to put in place an Associate Tutor in each of the Deanery's main Trusts (see above). Most of the remaining resources have been given to Trusts (via their Postgraduate Centres) to support requests from SAS doctors for help with specific aspects of their CME/CPD. This is NOT instead of the Study Leave funding to which you are (or certainly should be) already entitled, but could be used for instance to help with "top-up training" costs, attendance at meetings or courses not covered by Study Leave funding, or the expenses associated with attending specialty clinics, or learning new techniques.

How do I access this support?

Through your Associate Tutor for SAS Doctors, whose contact details are on the previous page. You are also most welcome to contact myself, John Lourie, Associate Postgraduate Dean, if you think I can be of help.
What is planned?

During the course of 2009/10 we plan to roll out a number of generic courses covering topics such as:

- Leadership
- Management for SAS doctors
- Building and maintaining a portfolio
- Training the Trainers
- Assistance with Article 14/CESR applications
- Teaching and presentation skills
- Appraisal skills and mentoring
- Helping the trainee in difficulty
- Workplace-based assessments for SAS doctors
- Career choices.

We would also like to hold an annual one-day meeting to bring together all SAS doctors in the Deanery, perhaps incorporating one or more of the above topics as a theme. Your suggestions and input would be most welcome as to the form this should take.

In addition we are about to hold the first of what will be regular meetings of all Associate Tutors for SAS doctors (on 29 April), to plan in more detail the way forward. If you have any ideas or suggestions you would like to put forward, please get in touch with your Trust's SAS Tutor.

What next?

This is largely up to you. What areas of your continuing education and career development would you like to see supported? What sort of meetings would be helpful and realistic for you to attend? How is it best for you to interact with your Associate Tutor? And with the Deanery? A number of you have kindly responded to the Questionnaire I sent out in the latter part of last year, and your responses and suggestions have been very helpful and I have tried to take them forward where possible.

Finally, is this Newsletter worthwhile? I see it as being a means of keeping lines of communication open, among and between you, the SAS doctors, and between you and the Deanery. Future issues will probably be shorter, and mainly to advise you of courses and other support available to help you get a better deal in the future. All comments, views and suggestions will be gratefully received!

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