

Patient care by residents is as good as by fully qualified doctors

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Medical residents are an essential part of the hospital workforce. Although still in training they take on much of the day to day care of patients. A systematic review published in BioMed Central's open access journal *BMC Medicine* shows that patient care by properly supervised residents is safe and of equal quality to that of fully trained doctors.

Residency training is an essential part of a doctor's education after they leave university. Once completed doctors are expected to provide [high quality care](#) and while many studies have looked at different aspects of residency training, the care provided by residents has not been comprehensively examined.

Researchers from the University of Amsterdam and University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) collated almost 100 articles published between 2004 and 2011 – all of which were related to residency training, post graduate training, and patient treatment. Together these papers largely point to a positive message both for the residents and the people involved in their training.

The majority of studies included in this systematic review showed that patient care is safe and of equal quality, to fully qualified doctors, when delivered by residents, especially those whose inexperience was balanced with teaching by more experienced staff.

Renée van der Leeuw who led this study noted, "A minority of results found some negative patient outcomes and several studies found that

patient outcomes improved throughout the residency period. We would recommend that for all residents, adequate supervision and evaluation, plus extra time to perform operations, is essential to maintain patient care."

More information: A systematic review of the effects of residency training on patient outcomes, Renée M van der Leeuw, Kiki MJMH Lombarts, Onyebuchi A Arah and Maas Jan Heineman, *BMC Medicine* (in press)

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