

UK medical schools are not attracting enough GPs

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UK medical schools are not attracting enough would-be GPs, argues a senior academic in *The BMJ* this week.

Richard Wakeford, Life Fellow at Hughes Hall in the University of Cambridge, warns that the NHS needs more GPs immediately – and that without a complete reorganisation of student recruitment, medical schools "will continue to overproduce graduates inclined to hospital specialties and research."

Workforce reports show that we need at least half of UK medical graduates to become GPs, yet UK medical schools "are not recruiting students with this career inclination in anything like sufficient numbers," he writes.

He points out that Labour has announced plans for 8,000 more [general practitioners](#) if elected, while Prime Minister David Cameron has promised seven day access to a GP by 2020 if the Conservatives get in.

Yet available data show that only around 11% of new [medical students](#) planned a career in general practice, says Wakeford. Even when they graduate, less than one in four doctors intends to enter general practice training.

So why are medical schools attracting so few would-be GPs?

He reviewed the recruitment websites of all 33 publicly funded UK

undergraduate medical schools and found very little information about general practice. He believes the reason could lie within the Medical Schools Council (MSC), the medical schools' representative body.

One of its aims, says Wakeford, is to "explore proactively the role of the doctor in the future and to pursue educational solutions for workforce requirements involving doctors."

Yet out of 33 members representing undergraduate medical schools, just two are GPs. He argues that these people are conflicted, saying "they have responsibilities to deliver appropriate [medical graduates](#) to the NHS, and they also have responsibilities (and loyalty) to their own, largely hospital specialist, disciplines and colleges."

How can a representative body comprising only 6% GPs be entrusted to direct undergraduate medical education, and selection into it, when the country needs 50% of doctors to enter general practice, he asks?

He argues that medical schools must act and the MSC's membership requires oblitative change. "This is urgent because of the training time lag. If the NHS is to survive, we need creative recruitment such that at least one in two, not one in eight, new medical students want to become the GPs of the future," he concludes.

More information: www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.g6245

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