

# Report calls for better work experience opportunities for doctors of the future

December 10 2014

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More work experience opportunities and better outreach activities are key in addressing the shortage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds considering a career in medicine, says a report today.

The Medical Schools Council's report, [Selecting For Excellence](#), highlights that 50% of secondary schools have not proposed a student for [medicine](#) in the last three years.

It now calls on the NHS and medical schools across the UK to do more to widen the talent pool to attract the best possible doctors of the future in part through outreach activity and equitable provision of work experience.

As part of the report, launched at the House of Lords, researchers from the University of Leeds looked at current work experience provisions to assess whether it was a deterrent to prospective applicants.

The report recommends that the Medical Schools Council must work with Health Education England and other bodies to ensure that a new work experience initiative, PRACTISE, is extended.

Dr Gail Nicholls, Director of Admissions for the School of Medicine at the University of Leeds, said: "Despite work experience being a valuable tool when applying for medicine, we find many potential medical [students](#) are put off by a work experience requirement. Yet it gives them an experience of providing care or help to other people, and it means

they have a realistic understanding of medicine and working in a caring profession.

"More needs to be done to make these work experience opportunities more equitable, as we are still finding that a person's ability to get work experience is often determined by their social class or their ability to 'network'. The right work experience and voluntary experience will help them start to develop the necessary skills to be a doctor."

Improved work experience opportunities in General Practice were another area of improvement identified in the report. The University of Leeds carried out a pilot project to enable prospective candidates to shadow in GP surgeries, whilst also being supported by workshops before and afterwards at the medical school.

Twenty-four pupils from local schools interested in helping widen participation were placed within teaching practices within West Yorkshire. After completing the project, 86% of the students thought that this work experience was beneficial and that it would help them in their application to a [medical school](#).

Dr Nicholls continued: "Projects of this kind clearly show that [medical students](#) of the future see the benefit of valuable [work experience](#), but it is a message which needs to be adopted more widely. We aim to network with other local medical schools and our clinical partners to work collaboratively on how we can reach more individuals over a wider area."

The School of Medicine's outreach activities reached more than 600 pupils between September 2013 and November 2014 in 112 schools and colleges. Dr Nicholls said: "We are fortunate in Leeds because we have a student body which is very active in our outreach activities."

"Widening Access to Medical School is run by our current study body, their activity includes an e-mentoring scheme, outreach presentations and the wanttobeadoctor website, with activity expanding year-on-year. They have recently also launched an Ambassadors scheme, which directly links students with local schools to debunk the myths about what medical schools are looking for and raises aspirations about potential careers in medicine."

**More information:** "Selecting for Excellence" is available online: [www.medschools.ac.uk/SiteColle...nce-Final-Report.pdf](http://www.medschools.ac.uk/SiteColle...nce-Final-Report.pdf)

Provided by University of Leeds

Citation: Report calls for better work experience opportunities for doctors of the future (2014, December 10) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-opportunities-doctors-future.html>

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