

Lack of research funding could leave health care training 'to chance,' says BMJ editorial

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Health care education researchers, led by Dr. Julian Archer from Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, have penned a heartfelt editorial in *The BMJ* calling for more research funding to support the evidence base for medical training.

Without it the authors claim that the future of training for doctors, nurses and other [health care professionals](#) will be 'left to chance' - to the detriment of their professional development, the efficient running of health services and the ultimate benefit of patients.

The authors cite the cost of [medical practitioners](#) 'getting it wrong'. Figures quoted in the editorial state that 98,000 people in the US and nearly 12,000 in England die as the result of preventable medical errors.

As well as the cost in lives there is a financial cost: in the US such deaths are thought to cost as much as \$29 billion, while in 2012-13 the NHS spent over £1 billion on litigation claims. These figures are the catalyst for calls to cap the amounts paid out in medical negligence claims in the UK.

According to the authors of the *BMJ* editorial, researchers working in the area of [health care](#) education face a dearth of funding. They quote a recent survey from Wales, where out of a total of 45 health care education researchers only four were principal investigators on research projects attracting grants of £100,000 over four years, while only 24 said they had received any funding at all. Put into context, Cancer Research

UK spent over £350m on research last year.

The situation is further compounded by the fact that health care [education researchers](#) are 'enthusiastic amateurs' and likely to be educators and clinicians working in their own time.

The authors acknowledge that research into illnesses and life-threatening conditions benefit society, "but without highly trained doctors the advances from that research could not be put into effective practice."

They also acknowledge that, while the situation is slowly improving in the US and in England, further financial pump priming is required if health care education research is to provide the optimum evidence base to support [medical training](#).

Dr. Julian Archer is Director of the Collaboration for the Advancement of Medical Education, Research and Assessment (CAMERA) at Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry. He is lead author of the editorial in *The BMJ*.

He said: "In our editorial we liken the lack of health care education research funding to bringing in constant improvements to the look and performance of a car, only to undermine those improvements by investing only in the cheapest oil. At a time when errors in the clinical workplace hit the headlines with a worrying frequency, and the levels of compensation are so phenomenal that there is a serious call to cap pay outs in the UK, now is the time for funding bodies to support us - the 'Cinderella' of health research - to provide the evidence base required to train health care professionals effectively."

He added: "To us and to many in the health professions the advantages are obvious: an optimally trained clinical workforce; a contribution to avoiding preventable medical errors; efficiently and effectively run

[health services](#); and ultimately improved care and clinical outcomes for patients."

Provided by University of Plymouth

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