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ST4 GP Training Posts - “Grow your own Macmillan GP”

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The background

The standard pathway to become a qualified GP is currently; graduation from medical school, two years as a foundation doctor with a further three years in specialist training. The GP is then qualified to practice independently as a principal, partner, salaried doctor or a locum.

For some years, the Department of Health has provided funding for a small number of ST3 doctors to apply for a 6-month ST4 leadership fellow post. This involves two days a week in clinical general practice, one day of personal study and two days a week developing skills or audit/project work in a particular area. Previous examples in the Oxford Deanery have included; public health, primary care for the homeless, PCT management and genitourinary medicine.

The idea

To devise suitable training to GP trainees nearing completion of training, to enable them in future to take on a role as a Macmillan GP.

The challenges

--Creating job descriptions that would satisfy the Deanery and national leadership criteria with regard to educational content for an identified national priority

Funding

--DH announces no central funding for ST4 in 2012.
--Deanery unable to accept funding for posts from other sources.
--Oxford Deanery found some under spend a month before the end of financial year, able to allocate to fund four local ST4 posts.
--There were seven different ST4 leadership posts available, not all posts were able to be filled.

The local triggers

--No Macmillan GP had been appointed for Buckinghamshire, despite several rounds of adverts

--A local hospice was keen to have additional junior staff, particularly a GP trainee

The results

--Two posts devised; one with a focus on end of life care, the other on early diagnosis and use of practice profiles.
--The four best candidates were applying for other ST4 positions so the cancer/Macmillan GP posts were unfilled.

The future

--If funding becomes available, the posts will be re-advertised next year.

This model of ST4 post to meet a need for service and training development can be rolled out to other localities and cancer niche areas. Currently working on ST4 job descriptions to incorporate the development of a survivorship strategy and one to map current EOL provision.