

Career prospects in paediatric gastroenterology*

A questionnaire was sent to 74 members of the British Paediatric Gastroenterology Group. Of the 65 returned, 36 questionnaires were completed by paediatricians, 16 by paediatricians in training, and 13 by other specialists.

Table 1 *Geographical distribution of consultants (NHS or academic) with special interest in paediatric gastroenterology (n = 36)*

East Anglia	1	Trent	4
Mersey	1	Wessex	1
Northern	1	West Midlands	3
North-West	2	Yorkshire	1
Oxford	1		
South-West	3	Northern Ireland	2
Thames—NE	3	Scotland	4
NW	2	Wales	1
SE	5		
SW	1		

Table 2 *Title of appointment of consultant paediatricians with special interest in gastroenterology*

General paediatrician	16
General paediatrician with special interest in gastroenterology	7
Academic appointment (professor, reader, senior lecturer)	13

Table 3 *Number of sessions devoted to gastroenterology by consultant paediatricians*

	Number of sessions weekly			
	2	3-5	6-8	8+
Number of paediatricians*	7	14	4	5

* Not estimated 6.

Special interests

All listed one special interest in addition to gastroenterology and 6 listed two additional special interests. The most popular other interests were neonatal medicine (6), nutrition (4), immunology (4), metabolic diseases (3), and infectious disease (3). A wide variety of other interests was given—such as tropical disorders, haematology, endocrinology, oncology, and virology.

*A report prepared for the Committee on Gastroenterology of the Royal College of Physicians, London.

Membership of societies

Forty-six respondents are members of the British Paediatric Association, 26 of the British Society of Gastroenterology, and 16 of the European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition.

Likely vacancies by retirement

Most consultants who replied had been appointed recently and expected retirement dates, with one exception, were between 1991 and 2010 particularly between 1997 and 2005.

Number and aspirations of trainees

Ten senior registrars, clinical lecturers, or research fellows seek posts as consultant paediatricians with special interest in gastroenterology, an additional 3 clinical lecturers seek an academic appointment.

Conclusions

- (1) There are about 36 consultant paediatricians, NHS or academic, who profess to have a special interest in paediatric gastroenterology. No NHS consultant is designated as a full-time paediatric gastroenterologist and at present only one academic title in paediatric gastroenterology exists. NHS consultants vary as to whether gastroenterological interest is incorporated in their job description or is of their own making.
- (2) The regions of the country are not well balanced—for example, 11 consultants (nearly one-third) are in Thames regions and only one is in Wales (Table 1).
- (3) The concept of two special interests is widely accepted by consultants but not by many trainees.
- (4) Only one vacancy by retirement is likely in the next 10 years. Whether any new posts are to be created with a special interest in paediatric gastroenterology is at present unknown. Academic posts with this special interest have so far tended to reflect the interest of the holder.
- (5) Of the 13 trainees with a special interest in gastroenterology, 10 wish to obtain a consultant post with this special interest and 3 wish to follow an academic career.

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