

Clinical Leadership

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Clinical leadership is thought to be an important ingredient to good quality healthcare, but it is only when it is missing that it features in the headlines. Sir John Tooke mentions leadership no less than 24 times in his report into Modernising Medical Careers (MMC): *Aspiring to Excellence*.¹ He not only comments on it's being missing during much of the planning of MMC, but also that doctors need far more training to acquire leadership skills to cope with the problems of modern day medicine. In their 2005 report *Doctors in Society: Medical Professionalism in a Changing World*,² the Royal College of Physicians of London commented on the fact that evidence presented to the report committee lamented the lack of leadership in healthcare in general, and in medicine in particular.

An internet search of the words "clinical leadership" will display many examples where healthcare services around the globe have failed through lack of leadership. Some of these reports are close to home.³ Other studies have demonstrated that there can be a positive link between good clinical leadership and improved patient care.^{4,5,6}

Leadership is thought to be inherently different from management. However, the two are often grouped together. Empey, Peskett and Lees⁷ talk about the transformational leader and describe the key elements required for effective leadership and Atun and Addicott⁸ review the evidence that there are differences between management and leadership. Atun and Addicott suggest that managers control and problem solve, whereas leaders need to enthuse followers by motivating, inspiring and aligning people, thus establishing a shared vision of where to go. On the other hand, the manager is transactional in his/her approach and has subordinates with whom he/she can plan a future strategy. Of course, it is not as simple as that and many managers have a facilitative, transformational style that tries to align groups. This is particularly important in professional bureaucracies, such as the National Health Service (NHS), where tribalism is common.⁹ Many who have taken on leadership roles in health and education find themselves poorly prepared for their role in contrast to their own perception of their clinical expertise.⁸

The call to improve leadership training is not new¹⁰ and the recent publication of the Medical Leadership

Competency Framework by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the NHS Institute in England provides food for thought on how to develop competencies from undergraduate to specialist trainee in medicine.¹¹ NHS Education for Scotland has also been working on a series of courses for the latter group.

Within Scotland, there are a number of programmes organised by Health Boards and the Scottish Leadership Foundation which promote better understanding of the qualities required of aspiring leaders. However, until recently, there has been no academically driven course with the end result of a Masters degree. Over the last two years, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow (RCPSG), in collaboration with the University of Glasgow Business School, has developed an MSc in Clinical Leadership which will begin this autumn. The course is modular in nature and anchored in action learning and action research techniques. The degree is supported by the latest on-line learning technologies and can be completed in stages through Diploma to MSc qualifications. Designed with the busy clinician in mind, the course endeavours to make the best use of participants' time and energy and culminates in a master's thesis on a topic relevant to the participant and their clinical situation, mentored by a senior clinician identified by RCPSG. The course is aimed at aspirant clinical leaders who may be self selected or identified by their organisations, and is designed to give the student a significant academic grounding in the theories and practicality of leadership in today's healthcare settings. Over the next 12 months it is hoped to develop specific modules for clinical researchers and educators. The course has grown out of interaction with the NHS, Members and Fellows of RCPSG who want more relevant taught courses and with the project's steering group which includes a variety of individuals with widespread experience in leadership positions in British healthcare. RCPSG and the University of Glasgow Business School have been impressed by the reception that the degree has had from the NHS in Scotland and are certain that the successful students will not only gain personally, but contribute greatly to the improvement of healthcare in various settings. RCPSG intends to offer a number of scholarships available to students in the MSc programme.

References

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EDUCATIONAL REVIEW ANSWERS

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|---------------------|--|---|
| 1. a) and e) | 4. a) false
b) false
c) true
d) false | 5. a) false
b) false
c) true
d) true |
| 2. true ~ a) and e) | | |
| 3. a), c) and d) | | |