

BOOK REVIEW

The Foundation Programme for Doctors: Getting In, Getting On and Getting Out

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The changes Modernising Medical Careers (MMC) has exerted on postgraduate medical training in the United Kingdom are apparent to all of those involved. Written by two medical students and a Foundation Year 1 (FY1) doctor, this book opens with a light-hearted illustration of these changes and how they affect trainees. It provides, in an informal and engaging style, a useful summary of the underlying principles of MMC and how they have been implemented in practice.

After the initial introduction, the application process is described. The information on the "mechanics" of the process itself suffers from being out-dated. Indeed many of the current online resources are not referenced, most importantly the portal for application (www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk), reflecting the state of flux in postgraduate medical education. The changes in the mechanics of the application process will be known to UK graduates and the benefits of this book relate more to how it supports students through the process of applying for Foundation Training.

The advice given on completing application forms is useful, with the sample questions and answers being particularly helpful. There is some valuable advice given on the types of things to use in your application form and how to focus your answers, e.g. how does your answer show you are going to be a good doctor? Can you substantiate claims with evidence from past performance? It should be remembered that this book was written by trainees and not those reading and marking the application forms. Not everyone will agree with all of the advice given and common sense must be used. For example, cutting down words by using "medschool", or using acronyms that middle-aged senior colleagues may find unintelligible, as advised in the book, should be avoided.

The details on FY1 are useful, especially the section on practical aspects of working as a doctor, e.g. the first day, contracts, working hours, pay. However, for foundation trainees in Scotland, the description of the assessment tools is unhelpful because a different system is used north of the Border. This is a recurrent fault. There is no description of regional variations in foundation training, with the focus being almost exclusively London centric.

The description of foundation year 2 (FY2) and beyond is unfortunately vague reflecting the career stages of the authors and also the fluidity of the foundation programme as it beds itself in. The authors do highlight the importance of gaining generic skills during the foundation programme and remind trainees that, to a certain extent, it does not matter which jobs they do during the foundation programme. However, one suspects that the experience of trainees now in Specialty Training 1 (ST1) posts would not substantiate this.

Trainees seeking answers as to how to secure an ST post following foundation will not find them in this book. The uncertainty surrounding the process precludes any form of detailed planning. The generics of how to enhance your CV, application form and interview technique are well covered and will serve as a good basis whatever form the process takes. What is not stressed sufficiently is the fact that the application process is competitive and that the competitors are your peers and that if you are not competitive locally then you are unlikely to be so nationally.

In short, this book does provide some good information on the background of MMC, the foundation programme application process and early life working as a doctor in the new training system, but it is already time expired. It has suffered as a consequence, with more accurate information being available via the internet both locally and nationally. That said, the basic principles of the book are good and perhaps when the process for recruiting medical students into foundation training is more settled an updated version of the book would be useful to undergraduates.

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