

**NHS**

**Careers**

# Careers in medicine

Join the team and  
make a difference



# Welcome to the NHS

The NHS offers a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

With more than 300 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your interests, skills or qualifications.

What's more, as a doctor in the NHS, you'll be given every opportunity to build on your skills and learn new ones as part of your medical education and training. See the centre pages for more information about this.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, information technologists and estate managers, to name but a few, are all needed to ensure the smooth running of the NHS. These people, and many more, work together as a team to deliver the very best care for our patients.

**To find out more about becoming a member of the NHS team, call 0345 60 60 655, email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk) or visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)**

We look forward to hearing from you!

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# Foreword

In this booklet you'll find out about careers in medicine in the NHS. Becoming a doctor isn't an easy option – it takes years of study and hard work. As you learn the skills you need, you will also learn a great deal about yourself.

If you like helping people there are few more rewarding or respected careers. You'll be part of a team of professional medical and non-medical staff delivering care to the highest standards in the modern NHS.

If you have the passion to improve people's lives and the determination to reach the highest standards you will have a wide range of career opportunities. You can follow a path to one of many specialties, from working in a hospital as a surgeon to being based in the community as a GP. The training and support available to you in the NHS can help you get to the very top of your chosen career.

**For more information about working in medicine in the NHS, please visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working) or [www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk)**

**If you have any questions, call our helpline on [0345 60 60 655](tel:03456060655) or email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk)**



# The NHS – a rewarding place to work

There are very few careers as rewarding as one in the NHS, or that give you the opportunity to work with such a wide variety of different people.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. This helps us understand the different needs of the patients we serve every day and provide the best possible service.

Whichever area you join, you become part of a talented, passionate team of people – committed to providing the best care and treatment to patients. You will also enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK.

### Benefits of working in the NHS

Everyone who joins the NHS is guaranteed a salary that matches their ability and responsibilities, and is given every opportunity to increase it through training and development.

On top of your basic salary, you will be entitled to five weeks' holiday a year. This rises to six weeks as you go through your training. You will also receive a range of other benefits, including occupational health and counselling services.

### Join one of the UK's best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous and comprehensive in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member and you will get an excellent package of pension benefits, fully protected against inflation and guaranteed by the government.

**For more information about the pension, and a full list of the benefits included, please go to [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits)**

## FULFIL YOUR POTENTIAL

- The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all staff, whether working full time or on a flexible-hours contract
- No matter where you start within the NHS, you'll have access to structured training or continuing professional development and be given every chance to progress within the organisation
- While working as a doctor in training you will receive regular support from your postgraduate deanery to assess your clinical competencies and provide careers advice to

support your progress towards full qualification as a doctor in the NHS

- As part of your medical education and training, you will be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge, and take on new responsibilities.

**See the centre pages for more on medical education and training.**

## PAY AND CONDITIONS

### Junior doctors

As a junior doctor you will work a 40-hour week, on top of which you will undertake various out-of-hours activities to support patient access to a 24-hour NHS. You will receive a basic salary for your 40 hours; additional duties and hours of work are allocated to pay bands and recognised by pay supplements, which are a percentage of your basic pay.

From August 2009, junior doctors should be working no more than 48 hours a week as an average. Some of these hours will be worked as a shift at the weekend, evening or night, depending on what type of rota is in place. Living in to be a resident on call at night is becoming a thing of the past.

### Other grades of hospital doctor

There are a variety of other roles for doctors working within a hospital. Consultants are employed on national pay and terms and conditions of service. In addition to their basic salary they may also receive other elements of pay, such as clinical excellence awards and an availability supplement during on-call periods.

Specialty grade doctors also work on national pay and terms and conditions. Some doctors are employed as trust grade doctors on local terms and conditions of service.

### General practitioners (GPs)

Many GPs are self-employed and hold contracts – either on their own or in a partnership – with their local primary care trust (PCT). The profit that a GP practice makes varies according to the services they provide for their patients and the way they choose to provide these services. It's this which determines GP's pay. GPs can also opt to be salaried employees of a practice or a PCT.

Other benefits of working in the NHS include training, occupational health services, automatic membership of the NHS Pension Scheme (unless you choose to opt out) and study leave for sponsored courses.

**To find out more about pay, and to see the most up-to-date salary information, go to [www.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits](http://www.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits)**



## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Patrick Strong

**Job title:** consultant radiologist

**Employer:** Bolton Hospitals NHS Trust

**When Patrick applied to medical school he was looking for a career with variety. Radiology has lived up to his hopes and he has enjoyed the challenge of a rapidly changing profession.**

I wanted to be a doctor from a very early age. Some of my attraction to the NHS was because my mother was a district nurse. I also had a feeling that being a doctor was a career I would enjoy because I saw it as a career with variety – something it has certainly lived up to – and



because I was attracted to science subjects. I applied to medical school when I was 17. It was while I was a medical student that I became interested in radiology. I found that I really liked the investigative element.

Following jobs as a junior hospital doctor in South Wales I did more senior jobs in Bristol and Plymouth gaining the clinical experience necessary to be an effective radiologist.

I worked as a registrar, then senior registrar in Manchester before taking up my current role in Bolton.

The most satisfying aspect of the job is spotting a subtle sign on an X-ray and coming up with a diagnosis, especially if colleagues have not seen the answer.

Radiology has changed dramatically since I started and I have been able to keep up to date through training. For example, I recently trained for a year in nuclear medicine, one of the newer developments in my hospital.

Radiologists now tend to specialise more than in the past. When I first came to Bolton there were four of us doing more or less the same kind of work, now there are 13 people with different special interests. Some spend a lot of time concentrating on breast cancer, while others concentrate on vascular disease, children, bone disease and other conditions.

### Helping you find the right work-life balance

As an NHS employee, you can benefit from flexible working, childcare and career support, and high standards of equality and diversity.

Over the past ten years, there have been a number of initiatives that have brought about significant improvements to the work-life balance of NHS staff – reducing stress, increasing motivation and improving productivity among staff. All these factors have helped improve patient care.

Moving forward, it is vital that we capitalise on these initiatives and ensure that the standards achieved are maintained and developed.

**You can find out more about any current initiatives and future plans at [www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces](http://www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces)**

### Manage your commitments in and out of work

The size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working opportunities.

Training to be a doctor is a full-time commitment but we will do everything we can to help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life – whether you're studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependents who need special care, or to study full time.

**We can help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life**

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, we may be able to provide a range of childcare services that are free for all NHS employees, including:

- nursery care
- after-school and breakfast clubs
- holiday play schemes
- emergency care.

**Get more information about the benefits and opportunities offered by the NHS at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits)**



# Your career in medicine

People become doctors for many different reasons but the common theme is a desire to help others. At its simplest, medicine is about treating illness, providing advice and reassurance, and seeing the effects of both ill health and good health from the patient's point of view.

'Rewarding' is a word that often comes up when you ask doctors about their work. They'll also tell you that there is no such thing as a typical day – no two days are the same and no two patients are the same. Every day can test your knowledge and skills in new ways.



## A career based on teamwork and opportunities

Doctors today generally work as part of a larger healthcare team, alongside other professionals such as midwives, scientists and therapists. Sometimes doctors lead the team; sometimes it is led by others.

As a doctor you will probably work in a hospital or in the community as a GP. Once you have qualified you could choose to follow an academic path, perhaps carrying out research to help us improve our understanding of diseases and how to manage them, or to work in a laboratory. There will be a career in the NHS that matches your skills and your interests.

Whatever branch of medicine you choose, you will have to examine the symptoms presented by a patient, consider a range of possible diagnoses, test your diagnosis, decide on the best course of treatment and monitor your patient's progress.

## A learning career

You will need to be decisive since your judgment can be pivotal to a patient's well-being. But you will be learning all the time – learning about new techniques and new ways to treat your patients and keeping up with research. You will have the satisfaction of seeing people recover thanks to you and your colleagues; sometimes you will have to cope with knowing that even your best wasn't enough but you will be ready to learn and develop your skills and knowledge.

Contemporary medicine is challenging and exciting. With new discoveries making their impact on medical practice, doctors qualifying now will see even more dramatic changes in the future. The many new techniques being developed include those arising from research in genetics, electronics, nuclear physics and molecular biology.

No two days are the same and no two patients are the same. Every day can test your knowledge and skills

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Anu Raykundalia

**Job title:** community paediatric specialist registrar

**Employer:** Ealing Hospital NHS Trust

**Building up relationships with children and their families brings Anu great rewards in her work. She also enjoys the benefits of working in a team.**

Training to be a doctor really gives you the opportunity to explore different career possibilities. I went into medicine with the idea that I wanted to work with children. My training let me do this and helped me find my niche as a community paediatrician. I like being able to build up a relationship with children and their families. In hospital you tend to work with children with acute problems, maybe in emergency situations,



but in the community it is more common to deal with children with long-term conditions such as cerebral palsy or behavioural problems. You see and treat the whole child, not just the 'sick' child.

Another satisfying aspect is that I work in a truly multidisciplinary team to provide the care that is needed. So as well as other clinicians, there will be social workers, dietitians, health visitors and a range of other professionals sharing skills.

I think it is important to see the big picture, not just the illness. When I began my training I was able to spend six months working in public health for a primary care trust because I have an interest in prevention. That was in addition to my rotations in different aspects of paediatrics.

I really enjoy working with children. I still do some out-of-hours work in hospital and there you can get the instant reward of seeing an intervention work. With my work in the community the rewards come from seeing changes over time with the families and children you have helped. It's very satisfying.

**I like being able to build up a relationship with children and their families. You see and treat the whole child, not just the 'sick' child**

### A modern career

The role of a doctor has moved on a great deal in recent years. As well as a more even balance of men and women in medicine, there are more people taking up medical careers from other health professions and more opportunities for graduates and others who want to change their careers. Having three science A levels is no longer the only way in.

Today, there is a much greater emphasis on working with patients to improve their health. Gone are the days of 'doctor knows best' when patients were discouraged from asking any questions about their own health.

### A flexible career

Careers are becoming more flexible. Today's NHS recognises the importance of a good balance between work and other things that are important to all of us, such as raising a family or taking a sabbatical to use your skills elsewhere in the world. The training programme for doctors makes it easy to take a break from your career if you need one.

As a doctor you will have a career with a variety of opportunities. You will continually be meeting new challenges and having the satisfaction of helping people. It will be a busy life but never a boring one.

**To find out more about the qualifications needed to work as a doctor in the NHS visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training)**

Today's NHS recognises the importance of a good balance between work and other things that are important to all of us

### What personal qualities will you need?

As a doctor you will need high personal and professional standards. The care of your patients will be your first concern and you will treat every patient considerately, respecting their dignity and privacy. You will take into consideration your patients' views without letting your personal beliefs affect their care.

You will be in tune with the NHS aim of putting patients at the heart of healthcare, so you will keep them informed and give them the chance to be involved in decisions about their care.

Self-awareness is another important quality in a doctor. You will know when you need to consult with your colleagues and you'll also be keen to keep your professional skills and knowledge up to date.

### Who will it appeal to?

Different specialties will require different qualities – for example if you want to be a surgeon you will need good manual dexterity or if you want to go into psychiatry you will need above-average listening skills coupled with high-quality clinical skills. As you progress through your training you will discover what suits you and what you are suited to.

If you are serious about being a doctor you'll probably find that most of these relate to you:

- a concern for people
- an enquiring and open mind
- a rational approach
- imagination
- the ability to handle pressure
- the ability to sympathise and be non-judgmental
- hard work
- patience
- determination
- decisiveness
- an awareness of your own limitations.

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Dr Jenny Stephenson

**Job title:** GP principal, GP trainer and PCT diabetes lead, Sheffield Primary Care Trust

**Jenny chose a career as a GP because it gives her the chance to get to know her patients, and also suits her own family life.**

I have been a GP since 1985 and I can honestly say that I have never been bored! It has been the right career for me as I have always wanted to help people. I was interested in being a hospital doctor, but I chose to be a GP for two main reasons. One was that I felt it was more flexible and more amenable to family life.

The other reason is that I like the chance to see people in their own homes. You can find out more about their background and it is much easier to understand the whole person. That's



also one of the most satisfying things about being a GP – you get to know families and see them through their life events. A GP isn't someone who just gives out medical care.

After I qualified as a doctor, I did my junior hospital doctor jobs in Sheffield. I then went on to the vocational training scheme in Barnsley. My final GP attachment was in Sheffield where my GP trainers were excellent. They were very supportive and able to adapt to my needs. While I was training I realised how much I enjoyed working in a team.

Teamwork is so important as a GP. In my own team I am aware of and appreciate the roles and contributions of everyone else. I couldn't do my job without them.

There are plenty of opportunities to continue your professional development once you become a GP. It's important to gain support in this, as I have found – I started a continuing education group for some GPs in my area, which has been mutually supportive and educational for the past 19 years!

I have also developed a special interest in diabetes. I have always been interested in this as it is a common disorder with devastating complications, which I can help delay or prevent in my patients by careful observation and timely action. It is on the topic of diabetes that I have run a local course for two years – vital stuff.

# Medical education and training framework

Your career path as a doctor is guided by a medical education and training framework. There are certain stages that you must successfully complete to prove your competence as a clinician:

- Medical school education (five years)
- Foundation Programme Training (two years)
- Specialty training (varies depending on which route you take).

## Training after medical school

During your final year at medical school you can apply for a place on a two-year Foundation Programme which begins every August. During your time on the programme you will work in a range of specialties in both hospital and community settings. Your abilities and competences will be assessed against national standards and you will have the chance to find out more about possible career options and build a wider appreciation of medicine and surgery before deciding on your chosen specialty.

The first foundation year (F1) will most often consist of three different four-month placements – ideally, one medicine, one surgery and one other specialty. Here you'll come into contact with a wide range of patients and gain experience of day-to-day care. You will have a supervisor and receive formal training based on a national curriculum, approved by the General Medical Council (GMC), for foundation doctors.

The second foundation year (F2) is usually made up of three further four-month placements. Many programmes include at least one placement in a specialty that may be experiencing a shortage of doctors, academic medicine or general practice, helping you make a decision about which specialty training programme you would like to pursue.

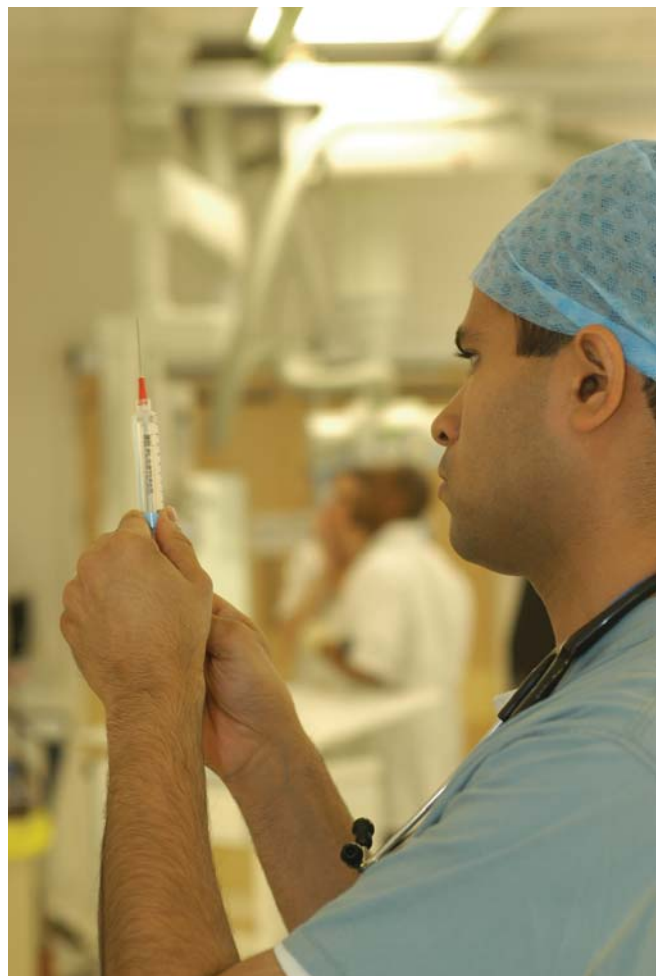
## Training after Foundation Programme

Following successful completion of your Foundation Programme, you will focus on a particular speciality field, such as cardiology or paediatrics. There are

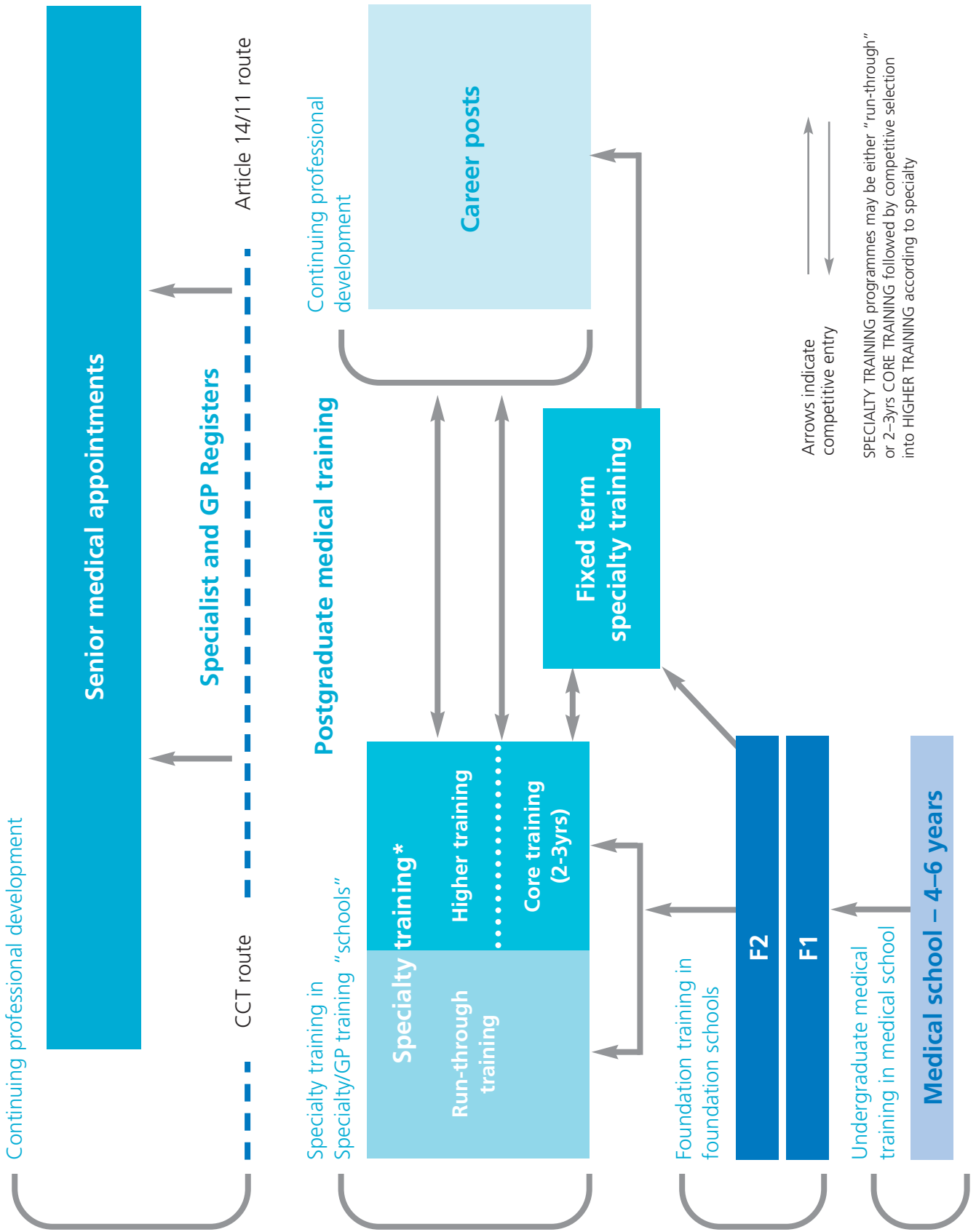
around 60 medical specialties that cover most of the conditions for which people are admitted to hospital. There are also other types of specialties that are concerned with people's health outside of hospital, such as general practice or psychiatry. As part of your specialty training choice, you should also consider whether you want to be part of an academic training programme or a public health programme.

Whichever route you take, all specialty training programmes lead to a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT), which qualifies you for entry to the Specialist Register or GP Register held by the GMC.

**For more information on Modernising Medical Careers, visit [www.mmc.nhs.uk](http://www.mmc.nhs.uk)**



# UK MMC Career Framework 2010



# What opportunities are available?

Saying that you are a doctor is just the start. There are around 60 different specialties and your medical training will give you the chance to find out which appeals to you most.

As your career develops you are likely to specialise in a particular area. Once you have graduated from medical school, your two foundation years will give you a good grounding in general medicine, surgery and some specialist areas. After the second year you can concentrate on the area that interests you most. You will be able to build up more and more expertise so that you can give the best possible care to patients and get to the top of your profession.

In virtually every specialty you will work as a part of a multidisciplinary team. Some require particular skills, such as an ability to make decisions in life-threatening situations or confidence with computers. Many require an interest in teaching or research and some require good manual dexterity. Broadly speaking, the specialties fall into the groups listed below.

This section gives a brief overview of the roles in each of the main areas of medical specialties.

For an up-to-date and comprehensive list of all specialties visit

[www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/specialty\\_pages.aspx](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/specialty_pages.aspx).

## Medical specialties

Medical specialties cover most of the conditions for which people are admitted to hospital. They are concerned with the science and practice of the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. There are more than ten medical specialties and the following list will give you an idea what's involved in some of the better-known ones.

- **Cardiology** encompasses the diagnosis, assessment and management of patients with heart disease. This specialty is high profile, exciting and demanding. Careful analytical skills are essential and decisive action can often save lives.
- **Public health medicine** deals with the medical aspects of public health practice and aims to improve the health of the community. Public health physicians tend to deal with the wider population's health needs rather than those of individual patients. As a public health specialist, you could be carrying out research into the health of your local population and devising programmes to tackle problems, or developing and delivering health programmes with other organisations, such as local councils. You will look at areas such as health inequalities, helping to close the gap between the least and most healthy communities.
- **Medical oncology** is solely concerned with treating cancer. There is a great deal of contact with patients and their relatives. Medical oncologists are physicians who specialise in non-surgical treatment of cancer. Their role is to discuss the treatment options with patients and their families, supervise the therapy and manage any complications that arise.

## Surgical specialties

Surgeons specialise in operating on particular parts of the body to address specific injuries, diseases or degenerative conditions. Advances in anaesthesia enable surgeons to perform longer and more complex operations, while innovation in areas such as keyhole surgery means that less-invasive surgical techniques are also being developed.

As with medical specialties, there is a range of sub-specialties including those listed below.

- **Cardiothoracic surgery** deals with the diagnosis and management of surgical conditions of the heart, lungs and oesophagus. A small aspect of the specialty is the transplantation of both heart and lungs, which is performed in a few specialised centres in England.
- **Neurosurgery** deals with the nervous system. It includes operative and non-operative procedures, intensive-care management and rehabilitation of patients with disorders affecting the brain and skull, spine and nervous system.
- **Ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgery** has more separate surgical procedures than most other surgical disciplines put together. There is a large number of conditions for which surgery of the ear, nose and throat will be required. The procedures range from removing tonsils to the treatment of head and neck cancer. They also include surgery for snoring problems, the removal of nasal polyps and surgery to correct nasal deformities caused by injuries – ‘nose jobs’. An ENT surgeon may also be involved with an infant’s hearing problem and loss of hearing in old age.

## Other specialties

- **Accident and emergency medicine.** This is the only hospital-based specialty where a complete range of illness and injury is managed. A&E doctors are generalists but specialise in resuscitation. A number of doctors also develop their own sub-specialty interests such as trauma. It is an area that attracts those who enjoy immediate decision-making.
- **Anaesthesia.** Huge advances in the science and techniques of anaesthesia are making longer and more complex surgical procedures possible. More procedures are also being completed using regional anaesthesia instead of general anaesthesia. As an anaesthetist you will be an essential member of the team providing expert care to patients before, during and after surgery. Anaesthetists also lead teams in the specialist areas of pain medicine and the intensive care management of critically ill patients.
- **Clinical oncology.** This is the non-surgical management of malignant disease, using both radiotherapy and systemic therapy. Managing cancer in all its various forms requires an enquiring mind, a secure general medical background, good practical skills and a commitment to patient care. You will work directly with patients in outpatient clinics and on wards. The challenging nature of the diseases that are treated means that using and contributing to research is integral to ever developing patient treatments. Teamwork and communication is very important; most clinical oncologists work in multidisciplinary teams of specialist nurses, radiographers, physicists, surgeons and other clinicians all delivering the appropriate treatment to patients.

### Other specialties

- **General practice.** If you choose to become a GP you will be the first point of contact with the NHS for most people. General practice is the 'gateway' to the NHS – you will decide whether a patient needs to be referred for further treatment or investigation. Most of your work will be carried out during consultations in the surgery and on home visits. No other specialty offers such a wide remit and range of conditions to treat.

Increasingly, you'll be working in teams with other professionals such as psychiatrists or public health specialists, helping patients take responsibility for their own health. There are now more opportunities for GPs to specialise in particular conditions, such as diabetes, asthma or dermatology, and to become more involved in hospital work, for example as a clinical assistant. General practice gives you the opportunity to prevent illness, not just treat it.

- **Obstetrics and gynaecology.** This is the specialty that covers the care of pregnant women, unborn children and the management of diseases specific to women. As well as being involved in clinical procedures you will have opportunities to work closely with the community. This specialty allows you to work in both medicine and surgery. In obstetrics, you look after women who are going through one of the most important events in their life – having a baby. In gynaecology, you can make a real difference to women with a range of problems, from difficulty getting pregnant to gynaecological cancers.

- **Ophthalmology.** This is the management of conditions of the eye and visual system. You will be involved in the care of eye conditions in patients of all ages, from premature babies to elderly people. Some people have eye conditions as part of a systemic disease such as diabetes. Most ophthalmologists provide both surgical and medical eye care but some choose to specialise in medical ophthalmology.

- **Pathology.** As a pathologist you will specialise in the detection of disease through a variety of investigative techniques, such as blood tests and biopsy. Your work can be vital in finding an accurate and early diagnosis and improving prospects for treatment. You'll also play an important role in identifying the sources of disease and reducing the risks of further spread.

- **Psychiatry.** As a psychiatrist you will specialise in mental health. This is a priority in today's NHS, with services such as child and adolescent psychiatry and old-age psychiatry being developed to support hospital and community care. Psychiatrists usually combine a general caseload with an area of specific expertise, such as learning difficulties or psychotherapy.

Psychiatric practice has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Smaller, modern units that focus on treatment to improve patients' conditions have largely replaced the Victorian hospitals that were home to people with mental illness.

- **Radiology.** Radiologists specialise in the detection of disease and every radiological investigation is a diagnostic challenge. You might carry out very simple investigative techniques or take decisions that are extremely complicated such as those based on inconclusive images from a scan. Nevertheless, the interpretation of any image presents a medical and intellectual challenge.

Radiologists now work closely with clinical colleagues, such as the team of staff that looks after the care of a cancer patient, as well as being responsible for the management of the imaging departments.

**For more details about the different careers you can pursue as a doctor, visit [www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk)**

## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Deenesh Khoosal

**Job title:** consultant psychiatrist

**Employer:** Brandon mental health unit, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

**Deenesh enjoys working in a multi-disciplinary team. His personal qualities, combined with the skills and knowledge he has acquired, have proved vital in a challenging profession.**

I made up my mind at an early age that I wanted to be a psychiatrist. As soon as I qualified as a doctor I began my postgraduate training. I have been a psychiatrist at a time of tremendous change. When I started my career, old-style Victorian institutions were still commonplace. They have been closed and replaced by modern residential services. The big change has been in the development of community-based services, where we aim to see patients in, or as close to,



their own homes as possible. Some of the changes have been made possible by the advances in our knowledge. For example when I started, only a few drugs were available. Now, they are much better and have fewer side-effects.

My work benefits from the involvement of the multidisciplinary team with which I work. The team consists of psychiatrists, community psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, pharmacists and so on. This is a positive step as no single person can hope to meet all the needs of patients.

It can be a challenging job, for example when I have to detain a patient against their will. Training and experience gives you the confidence to balance the patient's interests with those of the public.

My job is helped by having good listening skills and empathy as I work with patients with a wide range of problems. One of the other things I like in psychiatry is that diagnosis is based on talking to people – skills and knowledge count because you can't call for a blood test to help you!

The most satisfying part of my job is to see patients improving. It is so rewarding to see this happen and to know that you have been able to make a difference to their lives.

After all this time I have never had a single day's regret about my career choice. I highly recommend choosing psychiatry as a career.

# Getting started

If you decide you want to be a doctor you will have to start out at a medical school. Each of these schools is part of a university and will also have close links with hospitals and GP practices for medical learning, clinical teaching and scientific research.

Good A level grades or the equivalent are needed for most student places. However, medical schools will consider people with other attributes and skills that support their application. Evidence of scientific ability and the capacity for study are important. Some colleges run an 'access to medicine' course, which aims to bring students who have not studied for some time up to speed on relevant scientific knowledge before they begin a medical course.

Some medical schools offer accelerated graduate-entry courses lasting four years. With this type of course, medical schools can give credit to part of a student's prior learning. Some medical schools require applicants to hold a science-based degree, while others consider graduates in any subject.

After university, you will have what is normally referred to as a 'first MB degree'.

## The UK Clinical Aptitude Test

The UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) is used in the selection process by a consortium of UK university medical and dental schools. The test has been designed to help universities to make more informed choices from among the many highly qualified applicants who apply for medical degree programmes.

Some medical schools use other aptitude tests such as the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) or the Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admissions Test (GAMSAT).

It ensures that the candidates selected have the mental abilities, attitudes and professional behaviours required for new doctors and dentists to be successful in their clinical careers. The test does not contain any curriculum or science content; nor can it be revised for. It focuses on exploring the cognitive

powers of candidates as well as other attributes considered valuable for healthcare professionals.

## The Foundation Programme

If you are just about to start out on the road to becoming a doctor you will enter a two-year Foundation Programme after your medical degree course. After successfully completing this programme, you will be able to apply to a specialty or GP training programme, which can lead you on to become a GP or a consultant.

You will receive provisional registration from the General Medical Council (GMC) upon graduating from your medical school, and will qualify for full registration once you have successfully completed the first foundation year (F1), which usually consists of three four-month placements – medicine, surgery and another specialty. Doctors must be registered with the GMC to practise medicine in the UK.

Next comes the F2 year, during which you will have a chance to sample a range of specialties, such as psychology, immunology and clinical genetics and general practice.

Once you have completed F2, you will receive a Foundation Achievement of Competency Document (FACD), and can then apply to higher training positions to become a GP or a consultant. The FACD represents formal certification of attainment of foundation competences. This will be an important part of your clinical credentials for the future.

The Foundation Programme has been designed to enable you to gain competences in core clinical skills as well as other professional skills, such as communication and teamwork. It won't be enough to just understand the principles of these competences though – you'll have to show that you know how to use them in your day-to-day delivery of clinical care. You will be regularly assessed via methods such as case-based discussions and you will be required to keep a record of these in a personal portfolio.

### Funding

NHS Student Bursaries provide bursary funding for eligible students training to be doctors, from part way through their medical degree. The amount you receive depends on your individual circumstances. You can find out more by visiting the NHS Student Bursaries website at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students)

Speak to your careers advisor, call us on **0345 60 60 655** or email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk) to find out more.

For more information about training in the NHS, visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training)

For more details about the becoming a doctor, visit [www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk)



## CASE STUDY

**Name:** Samena Chaudhry

**Job title:** orthopaedic registrar

**Employer:** Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals NHS Trust

**Samena found that the variety of training offered by the NHS made it easier to choose her career path. Now she is being helped to tailor her specialist training to include her interests.**

I am just about to start out as a registrar in trauma and orthopaedics. It has been a long journey but a very rewarding one. My ambition is to be a consultant but I'm also interested in research and medical education, and the NHS is working on ways to incorporate these into specialist training.

My journey started with six years at medical school – five years of medicine and a year out after my two preclinical years to study for a



BSC in medical science. I studied cellular pathology and cardiovascular physiology. It was a real eye-opener into the world of research.

After six years I had an MBChB and a BSc in medical science. After completing a year as a junior doctor, working and learning the basics in general surgery and medicine for six months each, I decided to pursue a surgical career. I then started training on a surgical rotation, which lasted for two-and-a-half years. Every six months you work in a different field.

At the end you can go back to do another six months in your favoured area, in my case that was trauma and orthopaedics. The variety of work you do during training really gives you a chance to find out what aspect of medicine you like.

I took six months out of my surgical rotation to demonstrate anatomy. As my registrar said, you have to know it to teach it. I really enjoyed doing this and it improved my knowledge of anatomy a great deal.

Once I had finished the initial part of my training, I applied for a place on the specialist registrar programme. This led me to do different operations and will finally enable me to become a consultant. I was delighted to be accepted since places are very limited. It means I will now start training to become an orthopaedic surgeon. After my fourth year I can hopefully take a 'year out' for in-depth study of a specialty, such as hand surgery.

## What's your next step?

We hope you've found this booklet useful, and now have a better idea of whether a career as a doctor is right for you.

The starting point for your career as a doctor is your university application. The selection panel will look for some evidence of your motivation and commitment. So it is a good idea for you to get some practical work experience in healthcare before you apply. This will also help you find out if this is really what you want to do.

You apply through UCAS, including for accelerated graduate-entry courses. Each medical school

publishes its own prospectus, which describes the structure of the courses and the learning methods. Compare them to decide which will suit you best.

**Whatever position you're in now, the NHS Careers service can help. Call us on 0345 60 60 655, email [advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk) or visit our website at [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)**

**To find information about professional bodies, please visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts)**



Here are some other things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now.  
For contact details, please visit [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/contacts)

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
Studying for GCSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.stepintothens.nhs.uk">www.stepintothens.nhs.uk</a> and register for more information on chosen careers</li> <li>• Check what your likely exam grades/results will be.</li> <li>• Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career?</li> <li>• Enquire about volunteering or work experience.</li> <li>• Find out if you need any specific A levels, or equivalent qualifications.</li> </ul>	Subject teachers Your careers advisor/Connexions service Professional bodies NHS Careers
Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college	<b>As GCSEs, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate which universities have medical schools and compare the courses on offer</li> <li>• Find out if specific subjects are required. Do you need sciences or are there options to enter with non-science subjects and take a one-year pre-medical course first?</li> <li>• Investigate any further qualifications or skills you might need for your chosen role</li> <li>• Find out about financial support from Student Finance England and NHS Student Bursaries.</li> </ul>	Subject teachers Your careers advisor/Connexions service UCAS NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Student Bursaries
At university	<b>As A levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate which medical schools will accept graduate applicants for their accelerated programmes, and which degree subjects they will consider.</li> </ul>	University careers service NHS Careers Professional bodies
Looking for a new career	<b>As A levels, plus:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate fast-track medical degree courses if you already hold a degree</li> <li>• If you left education some time ago, investigate what evidence medical schools will require to consider you as a potential applicant (e.g. an 'access to medicine' course or alternative).</li> </ul>	Careers/Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services) NHS Careers Professional bodies UCAS NHS Student Bursaries

**FOR FURTHER COPIES OF THIS BOOKLET PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**PO Box 2311**

**Bristol BS2 2ZX**

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**[www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)**

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