INTRODUCTION

Anaesthesia, while still a popular option for core training, is facing difficulties with retention at higher levels of training. This has serious consequences for service delivery and training, adversely influencing rota and workload demands and impacting on time available for educational opportunities. In the longer term, inadequate numbers of trainees acquiring CCT will lead to a shortage of fully qualified doctors to meet the healthcare needs of Scotland. In order to attract and retain trainees, it is essential to identify both those factors which influence career decision making and attract trainees to particular specialties, as well as factors within training posts which may impact on retention at higher levels of training. The research within Anaesthesia to date does not identify those factors which are important to the current generation of UK Anaesthesia trainees [1,2], a gap in the literature this study aims to address.

METHODS

We used a mixed-method study involving a questionnaire survey and qualitative interviews. We targeted the 68 newly-appointed core and ACCS anaesthesia trainees within Scotland in August 2014 to assess career decision making factors at the point of entry into specialty training. Ethical approval was obtained for the study. Trainees were contacted via the Scotland Deanery with an invitation to participate and link to the online survey. Individual, semi-structured, telephone interviews were conducted with those who agreed to participate in this stage. Responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis and thematic framework analysis to identify key themes.

RESULTS

Forty-two completed responses were received: a response rate of 62%. Respondents tended to be aged 25-30 years (83%). Twenty three (55%) were male, nineteen (45%) female. Respondents represented 58% (n=29) of core trainees across Scotland and 65% (n=13) of Scottish ACCS trainees. Nineteen respondents (45%) agreed to follow up interview and 13 qualitative telephone interviews were carried out. There was a good spread of responses across the four Scottish regions. For those (7%) survey respondents, anaesthesia had not been their first choice of specialty. Two thirds of survey respondents reported prior exposure to anaesthesia, most commonly a “laster” week.

Factors influencing career decision making

Trainees were asked to rank the relative influence of 18 different factors (identified from the literature) when choosing a specialty. The results are illustrated in Figure 1. The most influential factors were: perceived job satisfaction amongst those already in the specialty, structured training; and the characteristics of the work (practical, varied, immediate results). Of all the variables considered, only role model in the specialty (p=0.001) and structured training (p=0.024) demonstrated a significant association with gender, with females ranking these factors higher. Interviewed trainees were asked to comment on the most important factor when opting for a career in anaesthesia – comments are illustrated in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

We identified elements within training which could impact on decisions to remain within the specialty or regions. Early positive experiences with anaesthetists encouraged trainees into the specialty and enthusiastic and supportive colleagues were also considered to enhance the quality of training. It was clear that structured training, including clear milestones, regular teaching and feedback are important to the current generation of trainees, along with opportunities and flexibility within training programmes. There were concerns of increasing service delivery to the detriment of training and a perceived lack of control over training. This understanding of what is important to our trainees can inform training programme content and design.

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


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