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It gives me great pleasure to invite you to read the first annual report of the Scottish Medical Education Research Consortium (SMERC) set up by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and Dundee University with all five Scottish university medical schools.

Our aim is to undertake and publish high quality medical education research in two areas – what constitutes a healthy workforce and a healthy workplace within the NHS. Our university partners are working with us to ensure that we identify the best quality evidence to underpin the teaching and training of medical students and trainee doctors respectively. Strengthening the links between undergraduate and postgraduate education should be one of the many opportunities emanating from this partnership.

Already we are seeing the early results of our investments in research into the priorities for Scotland in medical education research over the next 3-5 years. This involves all relevant stakeholders across the spectrum of service delivery, teaching and research in making the decisions on what will be identified as the “hot topics” in delivering excellence in the medical workforce for NHS Scotland. This work will also be used to inform educational research across all professional groups and will look internationally to identify best practice.

Our two PhD students are exploring how leadership emerges and how identity is affected through transitions in postgraduate medical education. Never has there been a better chance to move towards a more integrated collaboration from medical student through foundation years to specialty training and beyond.

As we move into our second year we have started to look for opportunities to work with third parties to extend the scope of SMERC’s work. I look forward to future reports building on our early foundations to provide the highest quality evidence for a medical workforce and working environment which Scotland can be proud of on a world stage.

DR STEWART IRVINE
Director of Medicine, NES Education for Scotland
We are a consortium between NHS Education for Scotland (NES), the University of Dundee (Centre for Medical Education and the Health Informatics Centre), and the Universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews. Although the consortium began its groundwork in September 2011, we were officially launched at NES’ Second Medical Education Conference in Edinburgh in May 2012.

We aim to produce internationally excellent research that has local, national and international impact on medical education through two main objectives:

1. To facilitate the data collection, analysis and reporting of routinely collected medical education data such as the national training surveys.

2. To develop, conduct and disseminate a programme of original, significant, and rigorous medical education research on two themes: workforce and workplace.

Ultimately, these two objectives should help us understand the workplace learning environment better and inform our understanding about how best to improve the quality of doctors’ training. SMERC should also act as a catalyst to build bridges across the medical education continuum including undergraduate, Foundation and specialty training. For further details about our organisational structure, governance and partners, please visit our website [http://www.smerc.org.uk/](http://www.smerc.org.uk/).
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2012

Key achievements in our first year of the consortium include building relationships, governance structures, communication, and capacity, all of which are fundamental building blocks for the success of SMERC and our programme of work over the next few years.

• RELATIONSHIPS: We have successfully built good working relationships between two very different institutional cultures (NHS and University). We have also successfully engaged all five Scottish medical schools, representing each within the governance structure.

• GOVERNANCE: We have set up a smooth-running governance structure with a Project Board with equal representation from NES and the Universities, and two Executive groups: the Data Quality Management Executive (DQME) responsible for overseeing the collection, analysis and reporting of routinely collected data, and the Medical Education Research Executive (MERE) responsible for overseeing all aspects of research activity.

• COMMUNICATION: We have invested considerable time and energy in engaging with numerous stakeholders across Scotland and beyond. Beginning with our launch at the NES Conference in May 2012, we discussed the first three research projects with stakeholders and we also launched the SMERC website providing consortium information, news and updates, links to reports and information, and links to our Facebook and Twitter pages. Please visit http://www.smerc.org.uk/.

• CAPACITY: Members of SMERC have participated in various capacity building initiatives to develop their understanding of, and skills in, medical education research. We have received seminars and workshops from the SMERC Visiting Professors (Tim Dornan, Maastricht; and Kevin Eva, University of British Columbia).
The joint undergraduate and National Trainee Survey Red-Amber-Green (RAG) reports were successfully sent out in July 2012 and were well-received. For the first time, we received anonymised individual level rather than aggregate data from four of the Scottish medical schools for the undergraduate reports.

RAG reports for the trainer survey were developed in December. These summarised the trainer survey data by health board.

We commissioned a piece of work by Professor Graeme Laurie and his colleagues at the School of Law, University of Edinburgh to provide best practice guidelines about data governance including legal and ethical aspects. This document was presented to the Project Board and an action plan is being prepared to secure its implementation.

We were commissioned to do a piece of work by the General Medical Council to review the National Training Survey data from 2008 to 2010 and develop new questions for the 2012 National Training Survey. Led by Justine Menzies and Mark Russell, this report can be found at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/NHS_Education_for_Scotland___NTS_report_2012.pdf_48233882.pdf
MEDICAL EDUCATION RESEARCH EXECUTIVE (MERE) ACHIEVEMENTS

- Two PhD proposals, students and supervisory teams were approved by the University of Dundee, School of Medicine Research Degrees Committee: “The emergence of leadership in interprofessional teams involving medical trainees”, and “Supporting trainees through transitions in postgraduate medical education”.

- Approvals were received from the University of Dundee Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) enabling the PhD students to collect data for stage 1 of their PhDs. Interviews with over 60 medical trainees across a range of specialties and levels in Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness have been conducted so far to explore leadership. Nearly 30 interviews have been conducted with trainees and staff involved in the Foundation Programme at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow so far to explore support for trainees through transitions.

- Approval was received from the University of Dundee HREC enabling our Research Fellow to collect data for stage 1 of the project: “Identifying medical education research priorities in Scotland”. Over 100 representatives from 15 different stakeholder groups in Scotland (including trainees, trainers, researchers and patients) have completed an online questionnaire collecting qualitative data on key priorities for medical education research. We have had exceptional engagement with leading stakeholders in Scotland across the spectrum of service delivery, teaching and research.

- We successfully won a competitive bid to the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) to evaluate the new supervised learning events in the Foundation Programme.
• We will conduct the analysis and Red-Amber-Green reporting of the 2013 National Trainee Survey and undergraduate survey. In terms of the undergraduate RAG reports, we will collect individual level data from all schools. Incorporating individual level data will enable us to conduct more robust statistics and develop more comprehensive reporting.

• We will be reviewing the scoring system for the undergraduate RAG reports and recommending any improvements.

• We will also be working with schools to find practicable solutions to reporting data from GP practices.

• We will work to develop the Scottish Trainee Survey (previously the Post-Assessment Questionnaire, PAQ). This will involve reducing the number of items on the questionnaire and inviting Scottish trainees to complete it at the point in time they finish each of their posts rather than a fixed annual point. This will help trainees respond more accurately about their experiences in each post.

• We will explore the feasibility of conducting research on the e-portfolio and the other routinely collected datasets using the data governance best principles framework identified by the work from Edinburgh University.
WORK AHEAD IN 2013: MERE

• PhD students will complete the data analysis and dissemination of stage 1 of their studies. They will write their thesis chapters pertaining to stage 1 and submit stage 1 findings to NES and for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

• PhD students will secure ethics approvals for the final stages of their studies and embark on data collection and analyses.

• Research Fellow will complete the data analysis and dissemination of stages 1 and 2 of the research priority setting project. These study findings will be submitted to NES and for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

• The results of the priority setting project will also guide the portfolio of work to be completed by SMERC researchers in 2013 and 2014.

• The SMERC team, along with its UK-wide collaborators, will conduct the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges-funded qualitative study exploring trainee/trainers’ views and experiences of supervised learning events. The team will provide an end-of-award report to the funders and disseminate findings through peer-reviewed journal articles.
PRESENTATIONS (CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)


- SMITHIES A, REES CE, KER JS & LOUGH M (2012) Setting the agenda for medical education research in Scotland: preliminary findings from an online survey with multiple stakeholders. To be presented at the Medical Education Institute Education Research Seminar Series, Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK, 30th January 2013.
• DENNIS A (2013) Identifying medical education research priorities: consulting relevant stakeholders across Scotland. To be presented at the University of Dundee, College of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing Research Symposium, Crieff Hydro, Crieff, UK, 7th February 2013.

• GORDON L (2013) Speaking from experiences: How do medical trainees in Scotland perceive leadership? To be presented at the University of Dundee, College of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing Research Symposium, Crieff Hydro, Crieff, UK, 7th February 2013.

• SMITHIES A (2013) Supporting medical trainees through transitions in postgraduate medical education. To be presented at the University of Dundee, College of Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing Research Symposium, Crieff Hydro, Crieff, UK, 7th February 2013.

• GORDON L, REES CE, KER JS & CLELAND JA (2013) Medical trainees’ experiences of leadership within the interprofessional workplace learning environment. To be presented at the 8th International Conference: Researching Work and Learning, Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling, 19th-22nd June 2013.

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