

ASMEBITESIZE – So you're thinking about a career in medical education?

Follow up Q&A resource

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Hi everyone, I have just finished my 3rd year of medical school and am really interested in getting more involved in medical education. What are some ideas of how to start getting involved?

It can be exceptionally intimidating first getting involved with medical education, especially as a student. I think, like most things in life, the hardest part is starting. I'd personally see what medical education societies your University has, and reaching out to them to see if you can get involved with some of the teaching they do. I did my first teaching through the surgical society at my University. They gave me the freedom to choose whatever topic I wanted to cover, and I was teaching the year below, so while still a bit scary, it wasn't nearly as bad as I thought it would be. Had the bug ever since!

How can one get involved in Medical Education without doing an AFP in medical education?

This comes back to that balance between clinical and academic work. I personally went down the route of standard foundation training followed by a full time job in Medical Education. This suited me, though, as I really enjoyed the medical education I did on top of foundation training so I didn't see it as a chore. I could also afford to take the time out of training to improve my skills as a medical educationalist after foundation training. I think the only thing you can do is find a balance that works for you. AFP does a good job of making that balance for you, but don't forget that ultimately you're only trading in four months of clinical experience for four months of academic experience, with sometimes no guarantee that your AFP will be in medical education.

Kind of similar to the last question - but are there any tips/things that look good on an AFP MedEd application?

Unfortunately there is no single best thing that you can do for your portfolio. Each Academic Unit of Application will be looking for slightly different candidates, and the whole process is competitive, meaning even if you do all the right things, you have to do them better than other people applying for the same post. In my opinion, the best thing you can do is grow and develop in the direction you want (go to courses that teach you skills you're interested in, present work you feel passionate about at conferences, network with people who have similar aspirations to you etc.). You will be surprised how far this will get you.

How do you juggle all of your interests, such as medicine, family, social life, etc.?

This is the age-old question for all medical professionals. The simple answer is that you have to find the balance that works for you. For me personally, I was always guilty of taking on more things than I

could cope with or do to a respectable standard. I always told myself "just get through this tough bit and things will get easier again." I eventually learned to recognise that when I told myself this, it was a sign that I was not getting my balance right, and I'd actively try to correct it. Sometimes this is not easy to do (when revising for postgraduate exams, with inflexible work patterns etc.) but the majority of the time, it was as easy as taking a few days of annual leave to visit friends, or politely withdrawing from doing my seventh audit this year. Remember that when it comes to career progression, there are very few deadlines you have to stick to other than those you put on yourself.

How do we encourage non-medical professionals/patients/carers etc. out of their silos to engage in the process of supporting doctors to be as good as they can be?

My best suggestion is to try building a community. Community engagement activities or inter-professional learning can sometimes end up as rushed, tick-box exercises that end up being a waste of time for all involved. By building a community, you will start having much more meaningful discussions with people. You will develop ideas as a team, execute them as a team, and watch the fruits of your joint labour come to life. So keep inviting the same keen faces to meetings, send them letters to update them on progress, talk at events your community thinks are worthwhile and make sure everyone gets the recognition they deserve when things go well. Oh and biscuits at meetings really help too!

Are there any extra requirements to clinicians teaching part time to start working in medical education full time (designing and managing med ed) please?

The main thing is to be intimately familiar with the national guidelines and frameworks that operate in the country you are based in or planning on working in. Many institutes will require you to have some form of postgraduate teaching qualification too. My personal experience with this, however, is that it is not always a barrier to starting working in medical education full time as a lot of institutes will invest in you and make sure you are qualified to progress within their organisation (e.g. by funding postgraduate qualifications).

Is there any funding available for intercalated masters in medical education or Pgcert /PgDip please?

Absolutely! The main place to check is the University you want to study at. They usually have grants, bursaries and scholarships available, but you will likely have to go through a competitive process to secure them. You can try approaching specific departments and asking them if they have any Medical Education research they want doing, and if they'd be willing to fund you to conduct it. Failing this, there are external organisations that fund postgraduate courses, but once again, funding is limited and you will have to go through a competitive process. If you don't mind waiting until after you graduate, a lot of medical education jobs will fund postgraduate courses for you.