

RESPIRATORY MEDICINE WORKFORCE REVIEW 2020

Workforce – a strategic priority for BTS

“It is now more important than ever to ensure there are sufficient numbers of well-trained staff to provide respiratory services across the entire NHS. This will include the whole respiratory workforce, ensuring capacity exists for respiratory research, as well as continuing to provide acknowledged leadership in service development and delivery in a rapidly evolving NHS environment. We see our role very clearly in facilitating respiratory care delivery in a COVID-19 world.”

Introduction

The delivery of modern respiratory healthcare is team-based and truly multi-professional. The Society’s programme of activities in relation to the respiratory workforce covers respiratory physicians, as well those in respiratory nursing, physiotherapy, lung physiology, physician associates, pharmacy, advanced clinical practitioners, psycho-social teams and dietetics and extends through our working relationships with those in other specialties, in primary care and in related healthcare professions.

Our objectives

- To work in partnership with others to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of well-equipped and supported professionals across the workforce to deliver safe, effective and integrated respiratory care.
- To call for an increase in numbers of specialty respiratory training posts to ensure that there are appropriate numbers of respiratory consultants to meet service needs in future.
- To address recruitment and retention issues within respiratory nursing, as well as ensuring that there are appropriate numbers of physiologists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, clinical psychologists and other health care professionals who work as part of the respiratory team.
- To support and encourage the effective integration of primary and secondary care through integrated community services to better meet the needs of those with lung disease.
- To raise the profile of Respiratory Medicine and the key role it plays in the NHS, enabling us to contribute to national discussion and consultation on NHS initiatives across the 4 nations.
- To work closely with the Royal Colleges, the JRCPTB, and other organisations and individuals to provide relevant and accurate information and data for and about those working in the specialty of Respiratory Medicine.

Our work to date

Supporting the future consultant workforce

A robust programme of data collection of respiratory consultant and specialty trainee numbers: this information provides a basis on which future projections and workforce planning priorities can be based.

An annual survey of respiratory consultant vacancies across the 4 nations: providing the data to allow BTS to highlight the shortage of respiratory consultants and support the call for additional training numbers.

The provision of a “Recruitment Hub” on the BTS website: this facility allows respiratory teams to advertise current and future vacancies across respiratory medicine, nursing and other health professions.

Supporting those who wish to apply for their first consultant post: through online resources as well as interactive sessions at BTS Winter and Summer Meetings.

Respiratory nursing

The development of a new Framework for Respiratory Nursing: Published in 2020, the BTS framework outlines the necessary training and development needs to support the respiratory nurse workforce of the future. This important resource will also form the basis of comparable framework documents for related nursing audiences, including paediatric respiratory nursing.

Raising the profile of the specialty

Raising the profile of respiratory medicine to support recruitment to the specialty among junior doctors, medical students and allied health professions: we provide recruitment materials for local career days as well as promoting the specialty via our online resources. Podcasts and videos featuring respiratory colleagues are available on both the BTS and RCP London websites. Case studies featuring the work of Physician Associates and other healthcare professionals are also available on the BTS and Respiratory Futures websites. Both BTS and Respiratory Futures have active social media streams, with a dedicated handle designed to support respiratory trainees.

Support for the respiratory community during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic: Uniquely, respiratory medicine was involved in all aspects of patient care from acute illness through to rehabilitation and post-discharge follow-up. BTS produced over 30 guidance and advice documents in the period from March to July 2020 to assist and support those working in the acute care and subsequent rehabilitation of COVID-19 patients. Work to support our respiratory teams will continue through the second wave and beyond.

Support and development of cross-boundary working: BTS has produced an updated position statement on integrated care. An online event took place in October to bring together healthcare professionals that work (or are interested) in integrated care from primary, secondary and tertiary care, providing an opportunity to hear about current examples of and best practice in cross-boundary working.

Support and promotion of respiratory research

To deliver high quality care now and in the future, BTS actively encourages and supports respiratory research and the professionals working across academia and the NHS who develop and deliver respiratory research. The rapid creation and delivery of clinical trials during the COVID pandemic, demonstrates the effectiveness of respiratory research teams and their importance to the future of respiratory care.

Securing the Future

The Society supports all those working in respiratory medicine in order to promote and maintain professional standards, and to ensure the specialty can recruit and retain high calibre staff.

Respiratory trainees and consultants make a major contribution to general medical on-call rotas and the provision of high quality emergency care in UK hospitals and it is vital that these services are maintained.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vital contribution that those working in respiratory care make to the health and wellbeing of those in the UK, as well as the international research effort.

The BTS response to the 2020 Health Select Committee Inquiry on Delivering Core NHS and Care Services during the Pandemic and Beyond provided an opportunity to draw attention to the long standing (pre-pandemic) pressures on the respiratory workforce,. It also highlighted possible solutions to ensure that the NHS is prepared for a resumption of services in the endemic COVID-19 phase ensuring that positive changes that have taken place in health and social care as a result of the pandemic are not lost.

In order to maintain high quality care, it is imperative that the respiratory workforce is able to attract the right number of people into the specialty, ensure that those joining the specialty remain within it, and do all they can to attract the younger generation of medical professionals in future.

BTS calls for an increase in specialty respiratory training posts: BTS has called for an increase of at least 200 new training posts in respiratory medicine over the next 5 years. This call for additional training posts is supported by the Taskforce for Lung Health, and was included in our response to the Health Select Committee Inquiry on Delivering Core NHS and Care Services during the Pandemic and Beyond.

Respiratory is a multi-professional team-based specialty. BTS calls for the recognition of the vital role that nursing, physiotherapy, physiology, pharmacy and related healthcare professions play in delivering high quality respiratory care. Through expansion and proper resourcing of respiratory teams, and the widespread adoption of integrated models of care, the NHS will be better prepared for the future.

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Useful links

Further information on the Society's work in this area can be found here:

<https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/working-in-respiratory/>

BTS evidence to the Health Select Committee 2020: DEL0109 - Delivering Core NHS and Care Services during the Pandemic and Beyond <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/4242/html/>