

Declaration of interest

Both authors are international medical graduates who may be affected by the above ruling.

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The professional status of psychiatrists: good but not great

There are concerns in Britain about the recruitment and retention of medical doctors, especially psychiatrists (Commission for Health Improvement, 2003). One potential explanation is that the profession of psychiatry is stigmatised (Mears *et al*, 2004) and neglected – mental health is still the 'poor relation' (Hoadley *et al*, 2005).

We recently conducted a postal survey of a representative panel of 412 adults who had been involved in a previous study (mean age 47.5 years (s.d.=17.3), 55% female, 42% in paid employment; Luty *et al*, 2006). Participants were asked, 'We want to find out if you admire and respect the people who do these jobs. Give each profession a mark out of 10 from those you most admire (10) to those you least admire (0)'. This was followed by a list of

26 professions. The results indicate that psychiatry is one of the least stigmatised professions, ranking 8th from top of the group of 26 professions. However, psychiatry was ranked lower than other medical professions such as general practitioner (GP), pathologist and nurse.

We feel that recruitment to psychiatry is likely to remain difficult compared with recruitment to other medical specialties. However, we were pleased that psychiatrists still enjoy a rather privileged position in the eyes of the general public. The ranking order of the 26 professions was: fireman, nurse, GP, schoolteacher, soldier, policeman, pathologist, psychiatrist, social worker, farmer, judge, postman, solicitor, computer programmer, dustbin man, bus driver, car mechanic, accountant, secretary, bank manager, butcher, shop member, member of parliament, estate agent, traffic warden and car salesman.

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Management training for all specialist registrars

I agree with Hewson *et al* (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, February 2006, **30**, 71–74) that management training should be an integral part of training for all higher trainees. However, I disagree with their conclusion that generic management training courses only focus on general aspects of management common to all specialties.

The West Midlands Deanery has recently started to run an innovative management training course, which is open to specialist registrars of all specialties and general practitioner registrars. The New Leaders Scholarship Course runs over 4 half-days, each a month apart. Between the learning sets each trainee develops a management or leadership project relevant to their own specialty. The trainees decide the content of the learning sets that are relevant to their projects. At the end of the course trainees present their completed projects or project proposals to an expert panel.

This format allows generic management training to be made relevant to specific specialties. The feedback from the first group of trainees to undertake the course has been extremely positive: they felt the course increased their understanding of management and leadership issues, as well as meeting their individual learning objectives.

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