

# Survival kit for a foundation doctor

During this transitional period in which senior house officer posts are being abolished and new specialist and GP training programmes are being introduced, it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure a training job in your chosen specialty after your foundation year 2 (FY2) post. This article is a general guide to help jump the FY2 hurdle and secure your next job.

## Career plan

Have a clear career plan and know how to get there. You need to be aware about required courses or exams. If, for example, you choose to go for radiology, you may need to obtain the European Computer Driving Licence, which requires up to 1 year to finish the course. Knowing such information makes you well prepared.

## Objectives

Have clear objectives during each year. How many audits are you planning to do? Are you planning to take any membership exams or take any courses? What about presentations? Are you planning to participate in departmental teaching or at hospital grand round presentations? Whatever your objectives are, you need to know them, plan them and finally do them.

## Relationships

Maintain good relationships with everyone you work with. This includes colleagues, nursing staff, patients and seniors. Remember that when you join a new firm or department, your consultant will ask about you and your behaviour, and the best people to ask about this are nursing staff and ward clerk. Additionally, ask yourself – who am I going to ask for a reference letter for my next job? Sometimes, it can be matter of a simple phone call on your behalf from your current consultant to the other hospital and your next job is confirmed.

**Dr Bader Hijazi** is Specialist Trainee Year 1 in General Surgery at Nobles Hospital, Strang, Douglas, Isle of Man IM4 4RJ

## Documentation

Keep records of everything you do. This should include teaching, presentations, publications, audits, research and procedures you undertook during the year. Do not forget about your forms in the learning portfolio. Everything must be well organized in a good-looking portfolio – this will help impress the panel for your next job before they even open the portfolio.

## Initiatives

Be active, take the initiative and be willing to act. Do not wait for opportunities to come to you, but look for them and use them. Try to participate in departmental teaching or the hospital grand round. Organize simple teaching for medical students. If you have the chance to learn any procedure and continue to perform it, this gives you a chance to impress others, especially your consultant.

## CV

Keep your CV alive. You need to attend as many relevant courses to your career as possible, participate in publications, presentations, research, audits, teaching and so on. Try to show your CV to your senior colleagues, i.e. specialist registrar or consultants, to see if you could improve it. If your CV is not alive, your career progression is dead, and this makes it very hard to secure your next job.

## Help and assistance

Ask for help and assistance when you need it. No matter what issue it is, personal, work related, family related, help is always there if you ask. This will improve your performance and minimize mistakes. If, for example, you are planning to carry

out an audit, it would be a good idea to discuss it with your consultant and/or the audit department, as they will be able to help you.

## Alternative plans

Have alternative plans for your career. If general surgery is your preferred career option, orthopaedics and accident and emergency would be other alternatives. Do not apply to anything and everything that comes through the door. You still need to be selective, but make your choices a little bit wider. Alternatively, if things do not work out in the UK, other countries may be another choice. Plan ahead and make arrangements as early as possible.

## Interview skills

Sharpen up your interview skills. As well as actual interview technique, make sure you understand issues related to your chosen speciality. You may benefit from attending an interview skills course. At the interview, use your own words and phrases. The panel members are experts in their fields and will soon realize if you are reciting pre-learned answers rather than using your own words.

## Perseverance

Keep up the hard work, be well organized and focused, and keep applying for jobs until you hear the good news. Many FY2 doctors have failed to secure a job because they gave up early, lost hope in themselves or were disorganized.

Hopefully these tips will help you secure the job of your choice. **BJHM**

*Conflict of interest: none.*

## KEY POINTS

- With new changes in the medical career structure, it is increasingly challenging for foundation doctors to secure the job of their choice.
- Knowing how to jump the foundation year 2 hurdles earlier in your career can make this transition easier.
- Maintaining good momentum throughout your foundation training will enhance your chance of securing the job of your choice.