

# The ill medical patients' acute care and treatment (IMPACT) course: the delegate's view

One of the most important principles of acute medical care is the early recognition of the critically ill patient. Often junior doctors are unsure how to intervene effectively when dealing with the critically ill patient, so a systematic approach to the medical problem is essential. The Ill Medical Patients' Acute Care and Treatment (IMPACT) course provides a good model of a systematic approach to recognize, assess and manage the acutely unwell patient.

## What are the aims of the course?

The IMPACT course is run by the Federation of Royal Medical Colleges and the Royal College of Anaesthetists. They state that: 'This 2-day course introduces the principles and practice of acute general medical care and the related knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes' (IMPACT, 2010).

## Who is it for?

The course is aimed at junior trainees (core training level 1 or 2) in medicine, the acute care common stem and acute medicine. Foundation year 2 doctors are also eligible to take the course provided they have undertaken at least 8–12 months training in acute specialities.

## What is the course structure?

Delegates are required to read the course manual and answer a 60 multiple choice question test before attending the course. The questions are submitted on the first day of the course, and are then marked and returned to delegates. There is no pass mark but it is an indicator that delegates have read the pre-course material.

The first day consists of a series of short lectures in the morning, discussing medi-

cal conditions that can result in acute illness. This is followed by practical workshops in the afternoon. These sessions allow participants the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of techniques such as insertion of chest drains, performance of non-invasive ventilation and electrocardiogram arrhythmia interpretation. The day concludes with discussion and feedback.

The second day is much more exciting and comprises interactive tutorials on integrated data interpretation (chest X-ray, electrocardiogram, arterial blood gas) as well as simulated critically ill medical patient management scenarios. The day ends with a session on communication skills and breaking bad news.

Both days are very relaxed and trainees are encouraged to participate as much as possible. Faculty members are from many different disciplines, including general medicine, respiratory medicine, cardiology, endocrinology, renal medicine, anaesthesia, accident and emergency and intensive care.

## Is there an exam?

The course does not have a formal exam but the following are required for successful completion:

- 100% attendance. If you are late or miss any sessions you will not be given a certificate of completion
- Submission of the completed pre-course multiple choice questions on the first day
- Successful performance at the skill stations and tutorials
- Successful completion of the critical illness scenarios on the second day of the course.

If delegates fail the scenarios or clinical skills stations, they are allowed further attempts, but recurrent failures may require them to repeat the entire course.

## How much did it cost?

The course costs between £425 and £550. Some centres offer a discount if you are an associate member of the Royal College of Physicians. The value of this varies depending on the location.

This is an expensive course but you can use your study budget towards it. Do not rush into applying for the course if you have not done at least 8–12 months of acute speciality during your foundation years, because you simply will not have acquired the necessary skills from work to successfully complete the course.

The best time to do the course is probably between the end of the second foundation year and the beginning of core training level 1.

## Where can I do the course?

A list of regional centres, dates, and contact details can be found on the website ([www.impactmedical.org](http://www.impactmedical.org)). Those interested in attending can apply directly to these centres.

## Was it worth it?

In the authors' opinion, this course was definitely worth every penny. It has helped to consolidate the fundamental principles of acute care and emphasized the importance of early recognition and treatment of the critically ill patient. It has given them confidence to develop an organized approach to recognizing, assessing and managing the acutely unwell patient. It has also increased their confidence to seek senior help and advice, knowing that the appropriate initial steps have been carried out when dealing with a critically ill patient. **BJHM**

*Conflict of interest: none.*

IMPACT (2010) Welcome. [www.impactmedical.org/index.html](http://www.impactmedical.org/index.html) (accessed 22 November 2010)

## KEY POINTS

- Read the course material before attending the course.
- Use your study budget if you can.
- Make sure you have completed 8–12 months of acute speciality during your foundation years before applying.
- Check if your trust runs the course and whether they offer a discount if you are an associate member of the Royal College of Physicians.

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