

Title:

Current state of undergraduate Trauma & Orthopaedic training in the UK

Background:

Although musculoskeletal conditions account for 20-27% of all referrals to primary and emergency care, deficiency in UK undergraduate training in Trauma and Orthopaedics (T&O) remains well recognised. We aim to evaluate the undergraduate experience of T&O training in UK medical schools and its impact on graduating students' self-perceived level of competence in T&O as well as career choice.

Methods:

An online questionnaire was distributed to UK medical schools aimed at graduating students between Feb'17 and July'17. This questionnaire was designed to evaluate the duration of undergraduate T&O training, quality and quantity of teaching received, and students' self-perceived level of confidence in key T&O topics before starting their medical careers.

Results:

We received 236 responses, of which 22.5%(n=53) expressed an interest in T&O as a future career. The average duration of T&O experience was 2.8weeks. This exposure was longer in those interested in T&O versus those not interested(3.4weeks vs 2.6weeks, $p < 0.05$). Worryingly, 21.9%(n=52) reported no T&O experience. Majority of students attended 1-5 sessions of: T&O lectures(62.7%), small group teaching (64.4%), trauma meetings (57.6%), clinics (66.1%), theatres (70.3%) and shadowing on-calls (50.4%). Unfortunately, 38.6% rated their undergraduate T&O experience as either inadequate or poor. Self-reported confidence was low across all T&O core skills: clinical examination (5.7/10), diagnosis (5.2/10) and management (4.7) irrespective of future specialty choice (1=no confidence, 10=complete confidence).

Conclusions:

This study demonstrated that undergraduate T&O training is inconsistent across the UK, with medical schools currently failing to provide adequate training in orthopaedics. Overall, graduating students lack confidence in clinical musculoskeletal skills.