

II Neurosurgical training programme director position and responsibilities

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In considering this key post in a training programme a few introductory remarks need to be made. The training programme needs to have an aim and a direction so that it can produce a well qualified, well trained and accredited Neurosurgeon capable of working in a multi professional environment. The training programme needs to be structured with progress monitored against clear objectives with trainees aware of their career pathways and goals. The training programme should be fair, flexible, transparent and there should be quality assurance of the programme. To achieve such a training programme requires commitment, vision and above all patience.

The appointment of a programme director for neurosurgical training

A Training Programme Director needs to be appointed to each neurosurgical training scheme. In many European countries the appointment as Programme Director is made by National Medical Authorities responsible for postgraduate education while in some it is made by the Dean of the University or the Postgraduate Dean who is responsible for postgraduate education. In many countries the Chairman automatically is considered to be the Programme Director. However, this linkage is not necessary and the appointment may take place with a nomination from the certified trainers who take part in the training programme. The appointment will normally be for a period of five years with possible re-election.

The criteria for a neurosurgical programme director

It is important to recognise that the Director of Training need not be the Head of the Department. In

fact in many ways it is advisable to separate the two functions because their commitments are different and having one individual to perform both tasks will inevitably produce areas of conflict. The proposed Director should be a certified specialist for a minimum of five years, should have worked full-time within the department (s) central to the training programme. The CV of the proposed Director should provide evidence of current and continuing scientific work with some indication as to his/her commitment to training.

Importantly an Assistant Training Director must be appointed and should be a certified specialist for a minimum of five years.

The Director must have full secretarial and administrative support for this task and it should be quite separate from his/her clinical commitment. It is vital that designated time be allocated to ensure that Programme Directors have sufficient protected time to carry out their responsibilities.

The responsibilities of a training programme director

One of the principal responsibilities of the Programme Director will be to establish a transparent and fair selection and appointment process for trainees. In setting up this process the Director needs to have a clear idea of the profile of the type of candidate suitable for the training programme and in coming to this conclusion he/she will need to have discussed this with the other trainers. The Director will have to decide on basic qualifications, the mandatory educational, personal and character requirements as well as important and contributory requirements which may be helpful in a trainee if the aims of the training programme are

to be achieved. It is also important that those applying for the training post are aware of the requirements.

It is the inherent responsibility of the Director to arrange and have written a carefully considered and balanced training programme which addresses the changing and progressive educational and training needs of each trainee throughout their training period.

The Director will need to organise an academic programme (lectures, research meetings, demonstrations, audit reviews, mortality and morbidity meetings) which is a central part of the trainee's educational programme. Trainees should be encouraged to be involved in the organisation of these academic sessions.

A period of time in research may benefit the trainee. In deciding on whether this should be part of an individual trainee's programme a Director will need to be certain of a number of factors. These are the trainee's ability not only academically but also in terms of being able to complete a project in time. The Director needs to know that the project is well designed, will be supervised effectively, has clearly defined and timed end-points and is properly funded. It goes without saying that the trainee will need to be enthusiastic.

After the appointment of a trainee a training agreement must be completed by the Director and signed by the trainee and the Director. This is an educational contract and should provide the trainee with an overview of his/her training.

The responsibilities of a programme directors to trainees

Their main responsibility must be to organise and co-ordinate the training programme. The trainees must be aware of all the processes and requirements of their training. The organisation and progression throughout training will need to recognise the needs of the trainee and a degree of flexibility will be required. Directors will need to provide leadership and assist in the assessment of trainees on a six monthly basis. In achieving this they will need to organise the trainees' appraisal processes, assess the competence of trainees and ensure that all trainees training portfolios are up to date. This will include signed reports, evaluation records and completed and signed logbooks. There is a European Evaluation Sheet and a logbook developed by the Joint Residency Advisory and Accreditation Committee (JRAAC) – a Joint Committee of the UEMS and EANS. The trainee will need to provide valid documentary evidence of the satisfactory com-

pletion of training. Throughout all this process the Programme Director needs to monitor, counsel and inform both the trainees and trainers.

It would be advisable, as a means of enhancing the evaluation of the effectiveness of the training programme, to have a parallel assessment form for trainees to assess their training. This assessment should be monitored by both the Director and the Authority responsible for the recognition of the programme.

The promotion of an ethos of a high level of professional conduct and ethics is mandatory within the training programme and although this lies within the remit of the Director, it must be a shared responsibility between the Director, the Trainers and the Trainees.

The responsibilities of a programme director to trainers

The Programme Director will need to ensure that all trainers have the appropriate training and support. If necessary they should arrange for trainers to attend "Training the Trainers" courses and other educational courses considered to be relevant. The Director has to ensure that trainers are fulfilling their training obligations, and, importantly, make certain that relevant documentation (assessments, logbooks) is completed in a timely (contemporaneous) fashion. The Director will also need to evaluate the effectiveness of education provision and ensure that the necessary resource elements are in place.

The responsibilities of a programme director to the training board

The Training Programme Director will need to make certain that the training programme's functions are agreed and to inform the Authority responsible for the recognition of the programme (JRAAC, National Board).

In this respect the Director will need to ensure that each training post delivers the education and training expected and agreed for that period.

The Director needs to advise the local administration or authorities on the facilities required for training and to point out any deficiency that will effect their ability to deliver the training programme.

There is also the major responsibility of organising and preparing the Unit for site inspections by authorised visitors. The Director will have the onerous task of identifying and reporting failing trainees and trainers to the responsible Training Board. The Direc-