

Medical Education Fellowships Evaluation Report 2010

1. Introduction

The North Western Deanery Medical Education Fellowship has been designed to maximise opportunities for those trainees who have a specific interest in medical education. The aim of such a scheme is to nurture the trainee's interest in education and to develop their skills and knowledge base further through collaboration with and support from the Deanery.

The fellowships began in 2009 when Medical Education Fellows (MEFs) were recruited through a competitive process overseen by the Deanery. Applicants make a presentation to a panel of Deanery staff and then have a short interview and undertake a scenario based written test. Throughout the selection process, the panel is looking for demonstration of knowledge, skills and a keen interest in medical education. Successful MEFs commit to a one year fellowship initially and on assessment of their achievements across the year, may subsequently be offered a second year. The fellowship is completed alongside their current training commitments. No additional training time is allocated for its completion.

There are a number of components to the fellowship. Specifically the MEF will be supported in:

- Undertaking an educational project which will span at least the first year of the fellowship.
 - The MEF is allocated a supervisor to oversee the development of their project.
- Completing 2 modules of the Postgraduate Certificate in Workplace Based Postgraduate Medical Education at Edge Hill University.
- Attending educational conferences and presenting project work related to the MEF role at regional and national fora.

Additionally, the Deanery facilitate 2 contact days per year to encourage networking between the group.

At the outset it was also hoped that the 'formalisation' of their educational role would bring benefits to them and their colleagues in their day to day teaching and learning in the clinical workplace.

There are currently 2 cohorts of MEFs following successful recruitment across 2009 and 2010. Table 1 shows the breakdown of MEFs by Specialty and cohort.

All 8 fellows in Cohort 1 have successfully completed the first year of their fellowship and have accepted the opportunity to progress into the second year. This report will focus on the experiences of Cohort 1 following the first year of the fellowship. Particularly the evaluation has the following aims and objectives:

1.1.Aims

- To investigate the impact of the fellowship on the MEF's role as an educator.
- To investigate the publicising of MEF project work at regional and national fora.

1.2.Objectives

- To carry out qualitative interviews with Cohort 1 MEFs at the beginning and end of the first year of their fellowship.
- To obtain information from interim and yearly reports from both supervisors and MEFs.

Table 1: MEFs by Cohort and Specialty

Specialty	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Acute Medicine		2
Anaesthetics	2	
Dermatology	2	
Diabetes/Endocrinology		1
ENT		1
Geriatric Medicine	1	
Medical Microbiology and Virology		1
Neurosurgery		1
Psychiatry	1	
General Surgery	1	1
Palliative Medicine		1
Plastic Surgery	1	
Paediatrics		1
TOTALS	8	9

2. Methods

Preliminary telephone interviews were conducted with all MEFs at the beginning of their fellowships (between August and September 2009) to obtain baseline data for any further evaluation. Follow up telephone interviews were then carried out with 7 of the 8 MEFs between August and September 2010. On both occasions interviews were digitally recorded for later analysis. Data was thematically analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a methodology which focuses on an individual's experience of a particular phenomena.

In addition to triangulate data, educational supervisor's reports and MEF reflective statements were consulted as additional evaluative data sources.

3. Results

3.1 Themes from Preliminary Interviews

The MEFs were asked about their expectations and current experiences as medical educators in preliminary interviews at the start of their fellowship. The data is presented below in summary form to contextualise the year end data that has been analysed for this report:

- *MEFs were interested in taking part in the fellowship because they already enjoyed teaching and educational delivery and wanted to formalise their skills for more effective teaching delivery.*
- *MEFs were unsure what to expect from the fellowship as they were aware this was a new venture for the Deanery.*
- *MEFs wanted to gain knowledge about educational theory, research methods and wished to improve their practical teaching skills.*
- *MEFs considered the fellowship important in their future career plans as it serves as a sound basis for an educational role and may open doors to further opportunities.*

3.2 Themes from End of Year Interviews

Data was analysed in line with the chosen methodology. Themes were extracted and the most salient are reported here with a brief description and supporting quotes.

Having the title "MEF" creates opportunities in Medical Education

"Having this title of MEF itself is very powerful...its opened loads of doors...people come up to me and say, we're organising this educational event, do you want to get involved...regional meetings, national meetings...and its all stemming from being an MEF." (002)

MEFs consistently reported the benefits they had experienced from having the title “Medical Education Fellow”, and the opportunities that this had created in developing their role as a medical educator. Specifically, the MEFs reported that this had led to offers to become involved in educational activity locally, within their specialty and also in some cases on a wider scale such as national and regional meetings. Generally MEFs commented that their role within their specialty or department was well known and that this resulted in opportunistic educational encounters as junior doctors and colleagues were directed to them because of their acknowledged interest in medical education.

In addition nearly all participants referenced the impact of the title in accessing a wider educational network and reported the importance of this network of educationalists upon their own development as an educator.

Increased confidence in delivering Medical Education

“I’m now looking out for more educational opportunities and I feel more confident to go forward with them” (003)

MEFs feel that due to the fellowship they are more confident in delivering medical education. In particular they referenced feeling more confident in developing and delivering educational initiatives. They also reported feeling more confident about the methods of delivery they were already using as the fellowship has allowed them to formalise their knowledge and understanding of this via networking with other MEFs and also the practical skills gained from completing the relevant modules of the Postgraduate Certificate.

Within this theme, there was a great deal of reference to the impact of the Postgraduate Certificate and the impact of the specific modules on MEF educator development. However, MEFs consistently reported the importance of the fellowship as a whole, rather than identifying one element in isolation and this was demonstrated in later themes.

Maintaining an educational portfolio has been beneficial in educator development

“At a day to day level, I can see I am becoming a better teacher.” (005)

MEFs reported that maintaining an educational portfolio had been beneficial for both practical and personal reasons. Reasons cited were that the MEF role had encouraged them to keep a formal track of the educational activity they were undertaking and initiating. Also, some MEFs commented on the fact that having an educational portfolio created opportunities to reflect on their own development and how much they had achieved across the year.

Access to a network of Educationalists has been beneficial

"I didn't expect the networks between educational people...I think the network between us is something that will remain." (006)

The benefit of access to networks of educationalists was a general theme within the interviews, specifically MEFs reported not being aware of the networks that existed and the structure of medical education prior to being accepted onto the fellowships. MEFs valued access to the networks of educationalists across the region and recognised the impact this had on their knowledge of medical education. Most frequently reported was the advantage of having a network of MEFs to access. All MEFs referenced how helpful having a peer group of "like-minded individuals" was, particularly in relation to their own development as educators. There were multiple references to how much had been learnt from each other during the duration of the fellowship and that this had impacted on the MEFs' practice as an educator. Specifically, MEFs felt that the network that they had established would be one that would remain after the duration of the fellowships.

The value of educational "mentorship"

"I had the opportunity to meet key educationalists and I definitely learnt a lot from them...I actually met someone who offered to be my educational supervisor if I pursued a higher educational degree." (002)

Whilst there were some initial teething problems with the allocation of some supervisors, MEFs noted that this had been quickly rectified by the Deanery and the matching to an appropriate supervisor had been a valuable relationship. There was a general consensus that supervisors had been more like educational "mentors" throughout the duration of the fellowship to this point. Specifically MEFs referenced the non-directive approach that supervisors had in the development of their projects. Additionally, MEFs valued the extended networks that they had been introduced to and the opportunities this had offered them. In some cases, the supervisor had been an inspiring role model to the MEF as they aspired to reach the educational position that their supervisor had achieved.

Valuable project and research skills:

"...It (the project) opened my eyes to the world of qualitative and quantitative research" (007)

MEFs reported the added value of undertaking the project element of the fellowship. Particularly MEFs were consistent in the view that the project had allowed them to explore areas of interest that they may not have been able to explore without the support of the Deanery and the supervision they had received. As an added benefit, the MEFs were grateful of the exposure to empirical research experience, particularly in relation to applying for ethical approval and having the experience of being the "lead investigator" for the research projects they had undertaken.

MEFs recognised that the projects had allowed them to develop a number of transferrable skills which would be important in any further educational projects or research they may initiate, and also in aspects of their clinical role.

Postgraduate Certificate formalised knowledge and skills

"I am probably an increasingly more confident deliverer of teaching...but also I am more confident in trying different ways of teaching...feeling quite confident in mixing my teaching methods now..." (005)

MEFs were consistent in the view that the Postgraduate Certificate had formalised the knowledge and skills they had into a structured set of skills and techniques. Many of the MEFs reported that their teaching methods previous to the fellowship were "ad hoc" and that the certificate had now encouraged them to think more carefully about the educational encounters they may lead, and helped them to create more effective learning opportunities for the learner.

In addition, all MEFs noted the impact of the feedback module as having a particularly positive and immediate impact on their practice as an educator.

Please note, a more detailed evaluation of the postgraduate certificate is currently being compiled in conjunction with Edge Hill.

Fellowships have helped to confirm career plans:

"I was always going to be an educationalist. Doing an educational fellowship has confirmed that for me and helped me take that next step forward." (004)

All MEFs shared the view that the fellowship had been an important experience in clarifying the educational role they would aspire to in their future career. MEFs were consistent in the opinion that the fellowship had helped them to understand the career pathways of medical educators and had given them some further direction. Additionally some MEFs commented that contacts they had made through being an MEF had given them much more information about careers within the medical education arena and the important "next steps" in progressing towards this.

MEFs also commented that the fellowship helps to demonstrate a commitment to medical education when thinking about future career progression as it had developed their expertise in this area. Some MEFs also directly acknowledged that this had been beneficial in certain other educational endeavours, for example, applying for a postgraduate degree in medical education.

The combined approach is key to MEF development

"Had we just done the PG cert alone without the MEF, yes it's good and yes it goes through educational theory and that...but you still don't have to actually take on that role. You can learn all about it and put some of it into action, but you don't necessarily take on that role of an educationalist as such. I think having the MEF behind you and doing the educational research...the meeting up between us and meeting up at the Deanery...that really grounds it and brings it all together...it's those extra bits I think that switch us from having done a postgraduate certificate in medical education to becoming you know, leading educators." (006)

A number of the MEFs commented on the importance of the combination of elements that the fellowship comprised of as being a key part of development in their role. Specifically, MEFs reported that the postgraduate certificate had given a sound foundation in theories of education but that being immersed in an educational project, having a network of other educators for support and having regular contact with the Deanery and each other had cemented that knowledge and impacted on their role as an educator.

3.3 Presentations and Publications

The table below details information obtained from each MEF interviewed about their current presentation and publication plans. The "Other" category relates to other publicising of MEF project work, or work inspired by the MEF scheme.

Table 2: Planned and Delivered Presentations and Publications

Type of submission	Delivered or submitted	Planned
Local poster presentation	All MEFs contributed to a joint poster on their experiences as an MEF for the Deanery conference in September 2010. 5 MEFs were also involved in submitting other individual or collaborative posters to the Deanery conference.	
National poster presentation	2 submitted to the AME conference 2011.	All MEFs who have not submitted to AME in 2011 plan to submit something in relation to their MEF projects to a national medical education conference in 2012.
Local presentation	A number of MEFs contributed to and facilitated a workshop on effective feedback at the Deanery conference.	

	1 MEF to present findings of project at October ICU STC meeting.	
Paper submission	1 submitted to AME conference 2011.	<p>All MEFs aspired to submitting the results of their individual projects to a journal within their specialty or to a medical education type journal.</p> <p>1 submission planned to a journal within medical education, following on from a poster presentation at the Deanery conference. 2 MEFs will work on this in collaboration with Deanery colleagues.</p>
Other	<p>1 MEF has developed content for BMJ online learning to facilitate knowledge and skills in relation to the treatment of burns.</p> <p>1 additional project which was inspired by MEF work was submitted as a poster to a national conference in July 2010.</p> <p>1 International presentation at International summer school for medical students.</p>	1 poster/paper submission planned to an international specialty meeting in November 2011.

4. Summary

The data presented here would indicate a number of important outcomes of the Medical Education Fellowships. It would appear that those who undertake the scheme:

- Have increased confidence in delivering medical education due to the holistic approach of the fellowship.
- Have benefited from having a title which acknowledges their educational interest and this has impacted upon their exposure to and delivery of educational experiences in their Trust and within their specialties.
- Have developed and changed their practice due to the involvement in the scheme, specifically due to the networks they have encountered and learnt from, and also due to the knowledge they have gained during the Postgraduate Certificate.

- Clarified their career plans for an educational role in the future.
- Developed an educational portfolio that has been important in their educator development and has helped them in striving for further educational achievements.
- Appreciate the additional transferable skills they have learnt in conducting an educational research project.
- Have produced regional and national presentations and publications concerning their educational projects, and plan to deliver more at a national level.

5. Conclusions

The MEF scheme is highly valued and impacts in a very positive way on both current educational delivery and in the development of future educational leaders.