Rehabilitation Medicine

The specialty

Rehabilitation medicine is the specialty that is concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of people with disabling medical conditions. It was developed primarily to meet the needs of young adults and those of working age, but aspects of the specialty, particularly relating to technical aids, provision of wheelchairs, orthotics or prosthetics, are relevant to people of all ages. The principal aims are to identify the impairments that limit activity and daily tasks; optimise physical and cognitive functioning; and modify personal and environmental factors to enable greater participation and quality of life. Rehabilitation medicine covers a large number of disabling conditions. The majority are acquired, such as traumatic brain injury, stroke, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis and limb loss. Congenital conditions or those arising in childhood, such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophies and limb deficiency, will continue into adulthood and require ongoing support, advice and assistance. The specialist services that deal with these are neurological and spinal cord injury rehabilitation, limb loss or deficiency rehabilitation and prosthetics, and musculoskeletal rehabilitation. Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine can sub-specialise in five main areas:

1. Neurological and Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation
2. Amputee Rehabilitation
3. Spinal Cord Injuries
4. Community Rehabilitation
5. Academic Rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation medicine consultants also have specialist expertise in assistive technology, including environmental control equipment, wheelchairs and orthotics; these are not disease specific and cover a wide range of complex disabilities

Training in North West

NHS North West is leading the development of Trauma Rehabilitation and the successful candidate will have new and exciting opportunities to learn about and develop the rehabilitation of patients following major trauma.

The usual training programme lasts for 4 years (ST3-ST6), in posts providing a mixture of Neuro rehabilitation, spinal rehabilitation and amputee/prosthetic experience. Trainees may take periods out of programme training to pursue research projects or obtain experience in other specialties for example stroke rehabilitation.

There are at present 8 Trainee posts in the North West Deanery Region and is one of the largest Rehabilitation training deaneries for the country. This rotation gives varied experience from acute rehabilitation, post acute rehabilitation, community rehabilitation, spinal injury, amputee and prosthesis rehabilitation. Rotation involves one year of acute neuro rehabilitation experience in a pioneering unit at Salford Royal Foundation Trust, and subsequent focused rotations in further two University teaching hospitals and adjacent District General Hospitals. There is Greater Manchester Neuroscience Network, with excellent neuro rehabilitation delivery model, which empowers trainees with knowledge of best practice in this field.

There is a regular education programme for neuroscience and rehabilitation medicine with identified 40 main topics covered in 4 years of rotation. There are also ample training opportunities in the allied fields to rehabilitation medicine. Research is encouraged throughout the training programme. As trainees rotate between Greater Manchester Neuroscience Network, trainees get enough opportunity in teaching and academicals.
Attractions

Rehabilitation medicine will be attractive to those doctors who enjoy working in a multidisciplinary setting to ameliorate the impact of disability on people’s everyday lives. Rehabilitation medicine physicians will support patients and their families through periods of change and need to be skilled in managing the physical, emotional and behavioral aspects of disabling illness. Many of the patients have recently had significant trauma, stroke, or neurosurgery and confidence in dealing with a wide range of diagnoses and ill patients is essential. Rehabilitation is an attractive career option for those who wish to enjoy flexibility in their training or ultimate career post in terms of hours and work commitment.

Quality and attributes

Rehabilitation medicine physicians are part of the multidisciplinary team and have responsibility for the medical aspects of rehabilitation. This includes establishing a diagnosis and prognosis, appropriate medical management of disease, health promotion and prevention of secondary damage and complications. They use specific diagnostic assessment tools and carry out treatments including pharmacological, physical, technical, educational and vocational interventions. Because of their comprehensive training, they are best placed to be responsible for the activities of the multidisciplinary team in order to achieve optimal outcomes in the treatment of the whole patient.

Good communications skills are essential to interact with colleagues, patients and relatives. Empathy and sensitivity are essential as patients may have life threatening conditions. Attention to detail and good diagnostic skills are an important part of a good physician. Although the specialty can be hard work it is often very rewarding.

Prospects for trainees and consultants

Rehabilitation medicine has developed rapidly into one of the most exciting specialties within medicine. Crossing the divide between hospital and community, it provides challenges in facilitating the optimum quality of life for a neglected group of the population - younger adults with physical disabilities.

There is a commitment from the British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine (BSRM) to work to increase numbers of consultants, and initiatives like the NSF for long-term neurological conditions recognize the need for expertise in rehabilitation.

Contacts and further information

Chairman of the STSC & Training Programme Director for Rehabilitation Medicine
Professor Jai Kulkarni
Email – jai.kulkarni@uhsm.nhs.uk

Regional Specialty Advisor
Dr Krystyna Walton, Consultant Salford Royal Foundation NHS trust
Email: krystyna.walton@srft.nhs.uk

More information on North West rehabilitation- http://www.rehabilitationmedicine.eu/

Recruitment Contact
North Western Deanery webpage:
http://www.nwpgmd.nhs.uk/ST3_Rehab_Med_Recruitment
Recruitment Helpdesk email: helpdesk.recruitment@pat.nhs.uk
Recruitment Helpdesk telephone: 0161 604 5553