The BMJ Careers fair was held at the Millennium Building in Birmingham. On approach it was as if one was walking into a massive armadillo-looking structure within ten minutes of the famous Birmingham new street train station. The venue was therefore inviting on approach and it felt like an adventure.

The fair was well and widely attended. There were stands from various deaneries inviting prospects to seek training opportunities in their deaneries. There were also stands by various Royal Colleges but learnt nothing new.

The GMC stand was difficult to enter and navigate as the stand was packed with printed booklets on various topics of interest to medical students and qualified doctors right to the exit. This made one wonder if the display at the stand was representative of observations about the Council by some members. There were several admirable locum agency stands that were creative in attracting prospects as audience were lured by free draw entries with chances to win the current must haves (for some) ….. iPhones iPods and iPads.

Altogether seminars attended included:

- **Polishing up your interview skills** - Kathleen Sullivan and Helen Goodyear
  An informative seminar with opportunities to ask questions of the presenting panel.

- **The SASG doctor** - Mr Mamdouha Morgan
  This gave a good insight about the SAS grade, its strengths and weaknesses. It discussed career and personal development opportunities for this group of Doctors with a focus on maximising annual appraisal and job planning opportunities.

Other seminars attended and their take home messages were:

- **Medical Leadership**
  - As medical professionals, we are required to familiarise and develop skills of the different facets of the Medical Leadership and competency framework.
  - In general, the focus of development at Undergraduate level - Personal Qualities and working with others.
  - Post Graduate level – the above and managing services and improving services.
  - At post specialist certification level – All the above and setting directions.
You cannot go it alone- if you want to go it alone, you are in the wrong career.
When reading documents- look for the executive summaries, they help you make sense of complex information and save you time.
People get difficult when they feel alienated. Therefore include as many if not all in team discussions; this is known to engender ownership.

- Amazing doctors
  - Anyone can be an amazing doctor but in depth research in your area of interest is necessary before practical contribution to various programmes available. Seek advice from experienced participants who have strong links in existing programmes especially those abroad.
  - Expect disappointments when negotiating time to go and work abroad on overseas projects if taking time off your current post.
  - Working abroad does not have to be for long periods, it could be for short but regular periods.
  - The experience can have advantages and disadvantages emotionally and financially.
  - Optimise your physical health before venturing for projects abroad and have an exit plan if unable to continue.
  - Sources of information include Christian Fellowship Overseas; Health Volunteers Overseas; Medicines sans frontiers; church mission society to name a few.

- Mentoring and coaching
  - Key skill in mentoring and coaching key is “silence”. This improves listening skills and encourages disclosure.
  - Start with open rather than closed questioning to help your recipient focus their thinking from a possible perspective.
  - You can have mentors in a different specialty from yours.
  - In a typical coaching session work on: TGROW. T-Topic G-Goal R-Reality O- Options W- Way forward.

- Changing career
  - The final session on changing career was interesting and well attended.
  - The session was by a former Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (practised in Scotland till 2004 and quit medicine) turned sports journalist.
  - Discussed broadly the question that can and invariably cross the minds of several clinicians for various reasons at various points in their career which may cause them to seek to change career…….What if it is not for me? This is in spite of having (almost in automatic fashion as groomed from undergraduate level) worked hard and ticked all the boxes on the upward climb on the medical career ladder.
The “death bed test” can help you focus on what you really want to do if you ask the question- what you would regret not having done when on your death bed.

- Focus on what you want.
- Cycle your own roads- “Be yourself because everybody else is already taken”- Oscar Wild

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