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Why is pediatrics facing a crisis in recruitment: Reflections on teaching and recruiting junior doctors in the UK?

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Pediatrics in UK is facing a recruitment crisis with falling levels of applicants. There was a 14% reduction nationally in applications in 2017-2018. For the first time in 2017 a second round of recruitment was opened to try and fill training posts. There are staff shortages across the NHS, and Pediatrics, like other specialties, has to fight harder to attract trainees. Junior doctors, from the outset, have pediatric patients in a wide range of specialties such as Surgery, General Practice, and Emergency Medicine. This, however, is not reinforced with practical pediatric teaching in medical school. On top of these long standing problems, the case of Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba, amongst others, has thrown into sharp relief the problems understaffing in pediatrics has caused. This case will further serve to discourage trainees to enter pediatrics, as it highlights the significant pressure and threat of legal action we face simply for trying to do our jobs. To try and counter the tide pushing trainees away from pediatrics, we have come up with several new teaching initiatives aimed at medical students and junior doctors, to help them engage with pediatrics, and encourage them to apply. These novel strategies have been very well received and we will share the structure and ideas behind these programmes to encourage others to take up similar initiatives. Our results as attached showed a significant increase in confidence across all taught domains on our pediatric essentials course, with participants rating on a scale as follows: 5=very good; 4=good; 3=average; 2=poor; 1=very poor, pre and post course, A paired T-test was performed to explore statistical significance, and all p-values were <0.05. We are now moving forward with further events aimed at recruiting junior doctors including a careers and mock interview days.

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