

Survey of Training Opportunities in Research in the East of England (STORE): do trainees feel able to obtain research experience?



EASTRN

East of England Anaesthetic Trainee Research Network

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INTRODUCTION

- In 2017, the GMC published 'Excellence by Design', new standards for the postgraduate curricula of all specialties, with an increased focus on the generic professional capabilities common to all doctors.¹
- The RCoA's 2021 Curriculum includes seven generic professional domains, one of which is 'Research and Managing Data'.
- Trainees are encouraged to use Educational Development Time (EDT) to fulfil the capabilities within these domains.
- In late 2022, the East of England Anaesthetic Trainee Research Network (EASTRN) was established to improve trainee access to collaborative research and quality improvement projects.
- We decided to use our first project, STORE, to assess research activity in training hospitals, and non-consultant (i.e. trainee and fellow) anaesthetists' experiences accessing research opportunities.

METHODS

- STORE consisted of two complementary surveys – a site survey (SITE STORE), to be completed by the EASTRN site lead at each training hospital, and an individual survey, to be completed by non-consultant anaesthetists in our region.
- Both surveys were completed on 'Google Forms'.
- Consent for publication of anonymised answers was confirmed at submission.



RESULTS

- 94% (16/17) of eligible hospitals responded to the site survey and 96 non-consultant anaesthetists to the individual survey.
- 75% (12/16) of ICUs and 81% (13/16) of anaesthetic departments were enrolled in research studies, although research activities varied across the region.
- 56% (9/16) of ICUs and 56% (9/16) of anaesthetic departments had a departmental research lead. However, only 66% (63/96) of trainees were aware of whether their department had a research lead.
- EDT was available at 94% (15/16) of sites, but only 56% (54/96) of respondents knew how to access it appropriately at their trust.
- Using the 5-point Likert scale, individuals most frequently gave a neutral response (3) to questions on whether they felt supported to engage in research opportunities (38/96), and to achieve the curriculum requirements for research (37/96) (Fig. 1).
- 42% (40/96) of individuals felt there were barriers to research engagement (Table 1).

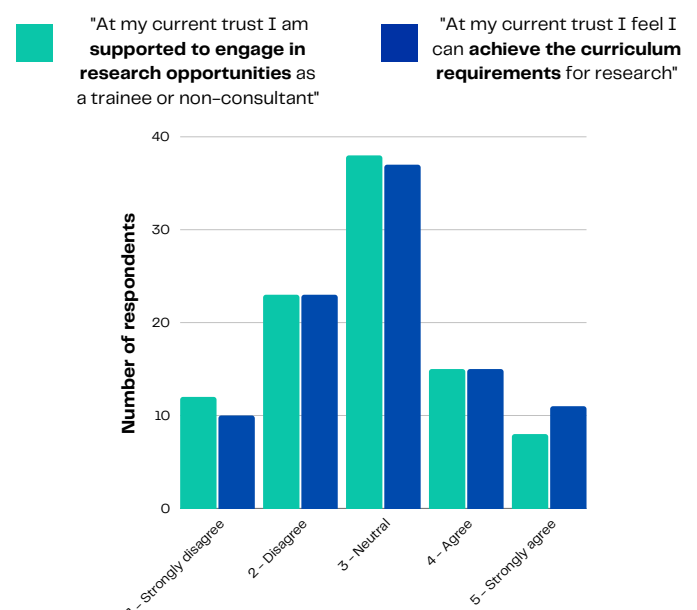


Figure 1: Trainees' experiences of accessing research opportunities at their current trust (using a 5-point Likert scale)

Theme	Key issues
Lack of available research opportunities (27/40)	<p>Lack of ongoing departmental research projects</p> <p>Lack of information about how to get involved in research</p> <p>Lack of visible research lead</p> <p>Lack of encouragement to engage in research</p> <p>No departmental culture of research engagement</p>
Lack of time (5/40)	<p>Challenges balancing multiple curriculum areas</p>

Table 1: Barriers to research engagement. The responses of 32 respondents were themed as above; those of the remaining 8 individuals were unique.

CONCLUSIONS

- Although there is research activity ongoing in most hospitals in our region, trainees are not necessarily aware of this or who their research lead is.
- Trainees need more guidance as to how to get involved in research, and support to meet their curriculum requirements for this generic professional domain.
- We have presented key results from this survey at a regional meeting, promoting that all trusts should make trainees aware of relevant local research opportunities.
- We have also advocated for the standardisation of access to EDT, to ensure trainees have time to engage in research, as well as to fulfil the requirements of the other generic professional domains.

REFERENCES

1. General Medical Council. Excellence by design: standards for postgraduate curricula. Available from <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/standards-and-outcomes/excellence-by-design> [accessed April 18, 2024].

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