

Editorial

How to prepare for a new rotation

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Introduction

Rotating jobs is common place in medical training and whether it is every 4, 6 or 12 months, it's not long before you find yourself saying goodbye and starting all over again. Although it's completely acceptable to turn up at your new job with no preparation at all, we feel that there are some simple and important steps that can make both your life and your new department's life easier.

1. Contact your consultant

When starting a new rotation, this is important, as it gives you a chance to introduce yourself to your new boss, and to establish any ground rules prior to starting. It can help you understand how the department is run, what is expected of you and if there is any reading or preparation you need to do beforehand. Ideally you would arrange a meeting with your consultant but an introductory email with a CV is better than nothing.

2. What do you want to get out of the job?

Although writing a Personal Development Plan is a mandatory part of every rotation now, it is very useful to think about this before starting a job. If you are doing 6 months in a specialty that is not your primary specialty then deciding what skills and knowledge you want to develop will help you guide your learning during the rotation. It will also help you and your supervisors identify appropriate learning opportunities. Where possible, aim to meet your new clinical or educational supervisor in advance of starting, (if you have to travel to the hospital for pre-employment checks prior to starting, you could arrange to meet on the same day so that you can go through your prior knowledge and skills, and plan for the time you are there.

3. Contact your predecessor

What better way than to know the ins and outs of the job that to ask the person who's just done it! Apart from having a formal handover about the outstanding clinical and non-clinical tasks, speaking to your predecessor also gives you a reference point as to how you may fare in the coming job.

4. Rota

According to the BMA Code of Practice [reference] rotas should be sent out a minimum of 8 weeks in advance. In practice however, this often does not happen. Finding out who coordinates the rota and getting in contact can often speed up this process. Knowing what the on-call

requirements are (e.g. how often, do you have to cross-cover other specialties) can help you plan your life during the rotation. Also find out who you need to contact about annual leave and study leave – and book early to avoid disappointment!

5. Read up on common conditions

It may be that you have very little experience of your new specialty outside of medical school exposure. Reading up on common presentations and making sure you are up to date on treatment guidelines will help you feel comfortable and confident from the beginning. Your predecessor or the consultant may have recommended texts or publications which they found useful. They may have a departmental handbook or "survival guide" which would be good to read before starting the post.

6. Induction – when and where?

Every new job should come with a trust and departmental induction. Finding out where and when this will be will make your first day less stressful and you can use this opportunity to find out what to expect from your new job.

Conclusion

Changing specialties and hospitals is a fact of life for junior doctors and has the potential to be a stressful time, but we believe a small amount of preparation can go a long way and will make your first few weeks much easier and less stressful for you. It will also help you make an excellent first impression, and we think make for a much happier and more educational post for you.

Conflicts of interest

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References

1. Barber Z, Dobbs T, Handa A. How to prepare for medical appraisals. *BMJ*. 2013;347: f6097.