Frequently Asked Questions for Palliative Medicine Specialty Trainees

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**Introduction**

In July and August 2015 we asked Palliative Medicine Specialty Trainees from around the UK to help us compile a list of resources they have found most useful throughout their training.

Both the APM Trainees Committee and APM Specialty Advisory Committee approved the survey that was used to collect this data. However, this resource represents the views of current trainees, not of the APM, JRCPTB or the authors, and is not intended as an endorsement of the resources listed, as an exhaustive resource nor as personalised advice, rather as a useful spring board to future learning.

We hope that this list will be of use to prospective, new and current Palliative Medicine Specialty Trainees. We certainly learnt a lot from your answers ourselves.

We would like to thank all trainees who responded.
Q1. What textbooks have you found useful during your training?

*Top 4 most frequently mentioned:*

- **Palliative Care Formulary (PCF5),** Robert Twycross (Editor), Robert Twycross, Andrew Wilcock, Paul Howard, Palliativedrugs.com Ltd, Oct 2014, ISBN-10: 0955254795
  You can also subscribe online at [http://www.palliativedrugs.com](http://www.palliativedrugs.com)


- **Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer,** Robert G. Twycross, Palliativedrugs.com Ltd, 4th Revised edition, August 2009
  *This book is out of print, you could try asking colleagues if you can borrow old copies, libraries, or get a second hand copy*

*Others mentioned (alphabetical order):*

  *Note this book is quite old now and may be too basic for trainees*


Q2. What useful websites or other sources of learning have you accessed?

Top 4 most frequently mentioned:

- www.palliativedrugs.com
- www.nice.org.uk/guidance
- www.pallcare.info

Other resources mentioned (alphabetical):

- e-ELCA
- http://apmonline.org
- http://book.pallcare.info
- http://www.cochranelibrary.com
- http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning
- http://www.gpnotebook.co.uk
- http://www.macmillan.org.uk
- http://www.ncpc.org.uk
- https://twitter.com
- PalliApp
- www.palliativecareguidelines.scot.nhs.uk
- www.sign.ac.uk
- www.uptodate.com
Q3. What useful journals do you read?

Top 4 most frequently mentioned:

- Palliative Medicine
- BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care
- Journal of Pain and Symptom Management
- BMJ

Other resources mentioned (alphabetical):

- BMC Palliative Care
- Cochrane reviews
- European journal of palliative care
- Journal of Clinical Oncology
- Journal of Medical Ethics
- New England Journal of Medicine
- PAIN
- Supportive Care in Cancer

Additional hints and tips mentioned:

1. Ask a librarian to help with literature searches.
2. Download Mendeley (https://www.mendeley.com/dashboard/) to help manage storing PDFs of articles.
Q4. How have/do you plan to achieve the research competencies?

Top 2 most frequently mentioned:
1. Research project (alone or with a peer group)
2. MSc research project

Other resources mentioned (alphabetical):
- APM study days (http://apmonline.org/events)
- Audit and service evaluations (with good literature review)
- Deanery study days
- Design a study
- Do a case-based discussion on a supervisor’s research project
- Good Clinical Practice training (available free e-learning)
- In programme research block
- Journal club
- Monthly research meetings MPhil
- Peer group meetings to complete research project PhD
- Published case report
- Regional ethics committee meetings
- Research methodologies course or MSc level module
- Screening or recruiting patients for trials
- Seeking ethical approval
- Systematic Review
- Time out of programme for research
- Write an abstract

Additional hints and tips mentioned:
1. Aim to meet your regional research supervisor within 3 months of commencing training and make a plan for your research block early in your training.

2. Good Clinical Practice training (available free as e-learning) is a requirement for anyone involved in clinical research.

3. Consider getting involved with NICE or in a Cochrane review.

4. Attend a local library training (e.g. literature searching, etc).
Q5. Do you know of any trainees who have done or are undertaking a masters or PhD? If so, at what institution? Was it face to face teaching, online or a combination?

*Top 2 most frequently mentioned masters:*

1. MSc Palliative Medicine, King's College London (face to face teaching)
2. MSc Palliative Medicine at Cardiff University (face to face and distance learning)

*Other masters programs, topics or institutions mentioned (alphabetical):*

- Bristol University
- Leadership and Management
- MA in medical ethics and law, Keele University (face to face and online)
- MA medical ethics and law, King's College London (face to face teaching)
- MA Medical Leadership, Lancaster University (face to face and online)
- Marie Curie Palliative care institute Liverpool
- Medical Education
- Oxford Brookes University
- Sheffield Hallam University
- Warwick University

*PhDs:*

- ACFs or OOPR may be available to support this
- www.findaphd.com

Additional hints and tips mentioned:

1. Think about if a research degree is right for you and what would best fit your interests and life style.

2. Think about the sort of consultant you might want to be and if or how a research degree might help you achieve this.

3. Think about whether you want to develop a specialist area of interest and if so what in (e.g. research, ethics & law, education, leadership or management).

4. Networking and searching online (e.g. findaphd.com) may help you to find a PhD.
Q6. Do you know of any funding available for further degrees?

*Top 2 most frequently mentioned masters:*

1. Hospice UK (previously Help the Hospice)
2. PhD studentships

*Other funding sources mentioned (alphabetical):*

- Deanery bursary
- Funding streams secured by local research groups
- Local funding schemes
- Marie Curie Institute Liverpool
- Out of programme
- Scholarships
- University bursaries
Q7. What useful courses have you attended?

Courses listed alphabetically:

- APM Ethics Study Event (http://apmonline.org/events)
- APM Science Committee Research course
- APM trainees study days
- Basic Life Support
- Cicely Saunders Institute courses (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Management)
- Communication Skills (e.g. Advanced Communication Skills course such as Connected)
- Deanery Courses e.g. in leadership, management, time management, dealing with confrontation, consultant interviews
- Educational Supervisor Training
- Effective Teaching Skills Course (Royal College of Physicians)
- Essentials of clinical education Post Graduate Award, Warwick University
- Good Clinical Practice course
- Guildford advanced symptom management course
- Keele Management Course
- Management Course for Specialist Trainees and SSAS Doctors in Palliative Medicine
- Marsden Opioid conference
- MSc standalone modules
- Royal College of Physicians Palliative Care study days
- Royal College of Physicians study days and events
- Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh webinar monthly study evenings (free general medicine updates)
- Royal College of Physicians study days, video-linked talks
- Royal Society of Medicine Applied Therapeutics in Palliative Medicine
- Specialty Certificate Exam revision course, St Gemma’s Hospice, Leeds
- St Christopher’s The Sharp End of Pain Control Course
- St Christopher's Management Course (over 1 year waiting list so book early in training)
- Teaching improvement programme system course (TIPS)
- Teaching the teacher
- The Oxford Advanced Pain and Symptom management course
- Train the Trainers (Royal College of Physicians)
- University College London Quality improvement in the real world
Q8. What tips do you have on how to gain teaching skills and experience?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Ask around for and take up any teaching opportunities – teaching, examining and writing examination questions for medical students, junior doctors (foundation, CMT, GPVTS), grand rounds, GP update days, small & larger groups of all AHPs, local MSc teaching

- Ask the hospice education team if you can teach on courses for AHPs

- Clinical Educational Fellowships (ask your Deanery or the Director of Medical Education in each Trust)

- Get feedback

- Link in with local medical schools

- Organise your regional ST teaching program

- Setting one up/arranging individual sessions/teaching half/full days and make sure it can be continued after you have moved on

- Setting up a teaching program Teaching courses

- Teaching observations

- Trainee teaching session on learning methods/teaching skills

- Training the trainers' course

- Ward based junior doctor teaching

Additional hints and tips mentioned:

- Consider a PG Cert Med Ed as this is required if you plan to have a formal educational role within a university.

- You could consider joining the National Association of Palliative Care Educators, [https://www.napce-uk.org.uk](https://www.napce-uk.org.uk).

- Consider join the Trainee branch of the Association for the Study of Medical Education, which has regional chapters and runs annual conferences [http://www.asme.org.uk/tasme](http://www.asme.org.uk/tasme).

- Look at the International Association for Medical Education website [https://www.amee.org/home](https://www.amee.org/home) for courses and conferences coming up.
Q9. What tips do you have for how to evidence teaching skills and experience?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Evidence teaching preparation with teaching plan.
- Keep a log of all the teaching you have delivered including: date, topic, professional group, numbers.
- Keep copies of teaching programmes with your name on as organiser or speaker.
- Reflect on teaching opportunities.
- Teaching observations by supervisors, education or teaching fellows.
- Uploading example power point presentations.
- Get written feedback. Then upload forms or a feedback summary report to portfolio.
Q10. What tips do you have on how to gain leadership and management skills and experience?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Acting up to consultant level
- Attend AGMs in your department
- Attend end of life care strategy meetings
- Attend hospice, trustee, CCG meetings, hospital, directorate, and regional senior management team meetings initially to observe, and consider taking minutes for meetings or possibly later in training chairing meetings
- Attend London Cancer Alliance meetings
- Attend STC meetings
- Attend team governance meetings
- Chairing MDT
- Check out the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management website for ideas/courses/fellowships (https://www.fmlm.ac.uk)
- Check the MDU and MPS websites for free online modules and courses in leadership topics Do a management project
- Doing rotas
- Leadership and management course (e.g Royal College of Physicians leadership course)
- Observe interviews and be involved in the interview process, including writing job description, advertising, long listing and short listing
- Offer to stand in for your consultant at meetings they can’t attend when you are a senior
- trainee, seek permission first from the group OOPE Leadership Fellowship
- Shadowing hospice CEO, accountants, directors of patient services
- Teaching from HR, medical director
- Try to gain experience in each post as each placement will have different management processes and structures
- Writing guidelines and policies
Q11. What tips do you have on how to evidence leadership and management skills and experience?

*Suggestions listed alphabetically:*

- Case-Based Discussions and Mini-CEX
- Course attendance certificates
- Discuss with supervisor how to get involved in management
- Keep a log of management activities and link evidence
- Keep copies of guidelines you work on
- MSFs and MCRs
- Present a poster at a management conference
- Reflect at all meetings attended, e.g. about team dynamics, chairing skills, management styles and leadership styles
- To keep a management log and to reflect on the opportunities as they arise on the e-portfolio
- Work placed based assessments relating to senior experience
Q12. Do you know of any specialist leadership or management courses?

*Most frequently mentioned course:*

Management Course for Specialist Trainees and SSAS Doctors in Palliative Medicine, St Christopher’s Hospice

*Other mentioned courses:*

- Check out the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management website for ideas/courses/fellowships on [https://www.fmlm.ac.uk](https://www.fmlm.ac.uk)
- 1000 lives study day
- Future Leaders Programme Local deanery courses
- Royal College of Physicians leadership course

Various postgraduate leadership courses:

- Keele University Clinical Leadership and Management Courses
- MSc Clinical Leadership in Cancer, Palliative and End of Care, Southampton University
- MSc Medical Leadership, University of Lancaster
- Various courses, Institute of Clinical Leadership, Warwick University
Q13. How did you structure your revision for the Specialty Certificate Exam in Palliative Medicine (SCE)?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- APM Website will soon have lists of guidelines designed to help your revise for SCE
- Ask for feedback from previous trainees
- Break it down into chunks
- Build up a folder of latest Cochrane reviews, NICE guidelines & relevant journal articles
- Do practice online MCQs
- https://www.mrcpuk.org/mrcpuk-examinations/specialty-certificate-examinations/specialties/palliative-medicine
- Use the topic guide and allocate time in proportion to available points (blueprint on website above)
- https://www.studyprn.com Email your local Prostrakan rep for access code
- Organise revision study groups – present topics, review guidelines and ask questions of each other
- Pay attention to the detail of the conclusions of reviews and reports
- Read the PCF
- SCE revision course, St Gemma’s Hospice
- Structure according to the curriculum
Q14. What useful resources and courses do you recommend to help prepare for the SCE?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Cochrane website
- European Association for Palliative Care website
- Hospice UK website (previously Help the Hospice)
- http://www.palliativecareguidelines.scot.nhs.uk
- [https://www.studyprn.com](https://www.studyprn.com) Email your local Prostrakan rep for access code
- NICE website
- Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine
- PANG guidelines
- PCF5
- SCE Revision Course, St Gemma's Hospice, Leeds
- Talk to other trainees
Q15. How have/do you plan to prepare for your Penultimate Year Assessment (PYA)?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Add the CCT calculator to the e-portfolio to help confirm CCT date (can be found on the JRCPTB website)
- Ask about interview topic areas pre PYA
- Be very organised and summarise all your experience, activity and any outstanding competencies in a log uploaded to your library in a prominent place
- Complete all assessments
- Examine PYA checklist and all training guidelines early on, discuss with ES and TPD, and identified remaining learning needs at start of ST6
- Focus on management skills at ST6
- Keep your e-portfolio up to date as you go through training
- Make sure as much of my curriculum is signed off as possible
- Met with supervisor and prepared a powerpoint & verbally present it at ARCP; summarise what you have done & what is outstanding to do
- Read the Gold Guide!
- Speak to trainees in year above about how to prepare
Q16. How have/do you plan to prepare for the consultant job application and interview?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Ask someone you trust read and critique your CV
- Books such as ‘The Consultant Interview’ (Success in Medicine), Sarah Watkin & Andrew Vincent
- Get people to give you mock interviews or practice with colleagues
- Interview courses available through local deanery, Royal College of Physicians, BMA, MPS or professional organisations, and private companies such as ISC medical interview course
- Keep your CV updated as you go along
- Log on to BMJ careers in advance and read job descriptions / person specification
- Reading NHS documents
- Research topics likely to come up at interview
- Review job plan
- Revise management issues
- Sign up to nhs.jobs
- Speak to as many consultants as possible
- Talk to new consultants for tips
Q17. How have/do you plan to identify a consultant post and then whether it would suit you?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- A job supporting specialist interests (e.g. research, teaching, ethics, law, leadership and management).

- Approach a few units to express interest and go ready with questions.

- Check NHS jobs, BMJ and APM website regularly.

- Contact consultants in the areas where you would like to work 1 year before completing training to assess if jobs are likely to be available.

- Find a consultant mentor to discuss application with.

- Get a feel for if it's the right place for you.

- Meet with the medical director to discuss the post and the potential, the organisation's vision and to judge if you fit the team / organisation.

- Need to decide NHS versus independent.

- Need to decide whether hospice / hospital / community.

- Reviewing and ask a consultant supervisor to read the person specification, job description and job plan.

- Sign up for a mentoring if unable to find an appropriate mentor, e.g. with the hospital, deanery or APM.

- Visit unit and speak to as many people as possible about it — both internal and external.
Q18. Do you have any other hints or tips you would like to share with other trainees?

Suggestions listed alphabetically:

- Begin research projects early
- Completing your training needs is as important as service provision
- Consider OOPE
- Ensure your supervisor is engaged with your training requirements
- Evidence your weekend on calls, e.g. logs, CBDs, ACATs
- Find a "buddy" more senior trainee for general questions, support and advice
- Get as much clinical experience as possible
- Get DOPS signed off early, particularly in hospital placements
- Get organised with e-portfolio and CV early, working smarter not harder, using the ARCP decision aid and PYA checklist as a guide
- Network with other trainees early (palliative and non-palliative), for support and ask questions
- Plan with supervisors how to get difficult to achieve DOPS in advance such as spinal lines, tracheostomy care, NIV
- Slow down, there is no rush!
- Keep a handy note of hints and tips during your training, and submit them to the trainees committee to update this list!

We hope you find this document useful and wish you every success in your training journey and in your future career!