

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Less Than Full-time Training in Surgery: A cross sectional study evaluating the accessibility and experiences of flexible training in the surgical trainee workforce
AUTHORS	Harries, Rhiannon; Gokani, Vimal; Smitham, Peter; Fitzgerald, J. E. F.

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Trevor Lambert Oxford University, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	12-Nov-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The paper is clear and well written. It addresses an important topic.</p> <p>I would have no concerns in seeing it published but I have a few minor points which the authors should attend to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I can't see a statement of response rate. There are 5761 surgical trainees according to the Methods (last line of para 1) and there were 876 accepted responses which I suppose amounts to a response rate of 15%. This is a typical response rate for an unsolicited email survey, but the authors should clarify it and say whether they have compared respondents with non-respondents to evaluate possible responder bias.2. I can't see a statement of when the survey was done and over what period of time results were collected - can the authors add such a statement?3. There are a few minor glitches in the text, as follows:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. page 4 line 21: What does the phrase 'a valid approximation of experiences' mean? - can a clearer phrase be used?b. page 7 line 40: 'usually not' rather than 'usually no' ?c. page 7 line 47: can teh authors explain the phrase 'banding arrangement', or remove it.d. page 10 line 18: 'largest percentage' rather than 'majority', as 44% is not a majority.e. page 10 line 35: 'Most respondents' appears to refer to 27.5%, which again is not a majority.f. page 10 line 46: delete the word 'also'.g. In Table 1, it is not immediately obvious what the denominator is for the percentages. I THINK all the percentages are of the whole 876 respondents, but this is not clear. I would prefer to see column percentages in the male and female columns, really, as well as for the total column, so that the reader can compare the makeup of the sample for men and women.h. page 24 line 47: 'I think' rather than 'It think'.i. Figure 2 on page 26: I would prefer the bars to represent percentages of total, of men, and of women, to facilitate comparison
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	<p>of the sexes.</p> <p>4. The STROBE statement appeared to be not completed. Perhaps the template rather than the completed file was uploaded?</p> <p>5. Could the authors consider adding to Table 3 a column showing the career stage of each commenter, and whether each commenter had personal experience of LTFT? This may add some context to each comment.</p>
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REVIEWER	Muhammed Ashraf Memon South East Queensland Surgery and Sunnybank Obesity Centre, Sunnybank, Queensland, Australia
REVIEW RETURNED	15-Nov-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Enjoyed reading this paper. Absolutely brilliant. Congratulations to the authors for such a fantastic job. Just two questions:</p> <p>Did you analyse the data regarding "local vs International medical graduates"? If this information is available, it may be worth including in this paper.</p> <p>Do you think the role of "mentors" is important in proactively discussing this issues with their "mentees" at the very start of their surgical training??</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1 Comments

1. Response rate

We would not know the exact number of people who the publicity reached as was cascaded through social media, and multiple regional and specialty mailing lists. However we had a total of 1004 survey responses, of which 876 were fully completed. So 87.2% completion rate. 'Of 1004 surveys submitted, a total of 876 were fully completed and included in the analysis.' However we know from the Joint Curriculum on Surgical Training (JCST) and the Royal College of Surgeon in Ireland (RCSI) that in 2015 there are a total of 5761 surgical trainees within the UK and ROI as seen in the manuscript. So in theory 876/ 5761 is 15.2% response rate. However our survey would have been unlikely to reach every surgical trainee as was not sent out directly through JCST or RCSI. However this in mind our sample size is still within the recognised guidance as referenced in the paper [Bartlett JE, Kotrlik JW, Higgins CC. Organizational research: determining appropriate sample size in survey research. Inf Technol Learn Perform J 2001; 19 (1): 43-50].

2. We have added into the methods the time period the survey was open for.

3a. corrected

3b. corrected

3c. corrected

3d. corrected

3e. corrected

3f. corrected

3g. All results presented within the manuscript are for the 876 completed responses. The column percentages are in both the male and female columns as well as the total.

3h. corrected

3i. We have changed to show percentages rather than number of respondents

4. STROBE Statement update and attached

5. All comments are anonymous and therefore we are unable to add the details of career stage or their experience of LTFT.

Reviewer 2 Comments

1. We do not have information regarding local vs international medical graduates sorry

2. We have discussed the need for mentors and role models to offer career guidance not just at start of surgical training but at a undergraduate level, as detailed in the discussion

Editorial Comments

1. STROBE checklist updated and attached

2. Manuscript title adjusted

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Trevor Lambert Oxford University, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	18-Dec-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	Thanks to the authors for dealing with my previous comments.
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REVIEWER	Muhammed AShraf Memon South East Queensland Surgery (SEQS) and Sunnybank Obesity Centre, Suite 9, McCullough Centre, 259 McCullough Street, Sunnybank, Queensland 4109, Australia
REVIEW RETURNED	19-Dec-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	The reviewer completed the checklist but made no further comments.
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