

Bouncing Back: support, mentorship and advice for those unsuccessful in urology ST3 national selection

BY DANIELLE WHITING

The 2018 BAUS Annual Scientific Meeting in Liverpool delivered the first session for applicants unsuccessful in urology ST3 national selection. The session was organised and run by Luke Forster, Core Training Liaison Representative, along with several trainees.

Background

The concept of the session was to provide support, advice and mentoring for unsuccessful applicants in deciding their next career move, re-inspiring them to pursue urology as a career and training to improve any deficiencies. The majority of attendees had been unsuccessful at national selection last year, with a few attending as preparation for applying this year.

An obvious concern for unsuccessful candidates in 2018 was the substantial reduction in national training numbers; 35 compared to 63 on offer in 2017 and 65 in 2016. Whilst there has been no clear explanation for this it was suggested that, with an increased number of trainees taking time out during their training, there are less posts available. As yet no one knows what will happen to post numbers in 2019 and it was raised that the application process and interview for urology ST3 national selection may arrive earlier to coincide with ST1 applications. Therefore, the session highlighted the importance of early preparation to maximise our potential.

Course structure

First of all there was plenary and small group discussion covering our experience of the national selection process, dealing with the disappointment of not getting a job, the impact this has on us as a group and what our plans were for the year to come. The main points were fed back to the group to summarise the most common and important points.

Then there were a series of interactive lectures from urology trainees. This started with advice on 'bouncing back' from trainees

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who had been through the same experience. There was an acknowledgement of the psychological and emotional impact this can have. The talks were positive with an emphasis on the opportunities available. There were discussions and advice on planning for a clinical fellow year and getting the most out of it. Developing our 'portfolio' was detailed as an obvious way to improve ourselves as candidates for national selection. Clearer portfolio self-assessment guidance now available from Health Education England meant that there was no guessing what was required to score in this station and it is one of the easiest areas for unsuccessful applicants to develop. Other lectures included advanced communication, using simulation to improve your surgical skills and getting emergency and elective urology knowledge and experience. Although each talk was delivered by an individual registrar, the other faculty gave supplementary advice.

The event was sponsored and supported by The Urology Foundation. There were refreshments available throughout, making the session more comfortable. We heard about an opportunity for core trainees and clinical fellows to get involved in a collaborative charity effort, the WARRIOR Programme; this sounded like an exciting opportunity (you can read more about this in the following article).

The session concluded with 1:1 advice helping to focus on our specific situations to maximise our potential for the next national selection. We discussed our own experience, strengths and weaknesses and started to make plans to make ourselves excellent candidates for ST3 selection.

Personal reflection

I attended having been unsuccessful at last

year's national selection and wanting to focus on how I could improve as a candidate in preparation for the next year. For me the session gave me a sense of support and displayed the year ahead as a huge opportunity, leaving me inspired to continue in pursuit of a career in urology. And, with at least five job advertisements throughout the session it was clear that there are a lot of opportunities for us as a cohort. I have no doubt that a session in Glasgow in 2019 will be as well received by unsuccessful applicants.

Top five tips

1. Don't panic about being unsuccessful
2. Start interview preparation early
3. Review the portfolio requirements and identify areas to improve your score
4. Work with colleagues who have been or are going for the interview process
5. Get involved in unique projects such as the WARRIOR Programme

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