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Cumbria leading the way for medical training

Posted on Thursday 14th December 2017

Doctors looking for innovative ways to progress their career are being encouraged to look no further in a new programme featuring health services in Cumbria.

The programme, 21st century healthcare, produced by ITN Productions in partnership with The Royal Society of Medicine, looks at training posts for medical staff that are unique to Cumbria. Across the UK there is a shortage of doctors which causes challenges for recruitment. In Cumbria these challenges are worsened by the rural nature of many services and an aging population so NHS Trusts have been thinking creatively to attract doctors to the area.



Lynsey Brown, Medical Directorate Business Manager at Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT), explained:

"To meet the needs of our patients we have to do things differently and by doing so we've created some fantastic opportunities that put Cumbria a step ahead of other areas. The training that we can offer can't be found elsewhere which makes the area a really attractive choice for those looking for something a little different. We are making sure that our services meet the needs of local people now and well into the future."

Trainee GPs have the opportunity to specialise in a particular area, such as palliative care or diabetes, alongside their GP placements. Work is also underway with international GPs to create bespoke training placements across the health system and prepare them for work in the UK. Dr Rosina Connone, an International GP who features in the programme, has relocated from Italy with her family with the aim of securing a post as a Cumbrian GP:

"This training works very well because I have the opportunity to get new medical skills and to start working while studying. It has allowed me to advance professionally but has also been a real adventure for my family. The people here are very friendly and we're enjoying the quality of life here."

At West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven, the award winning Composite Workforce Model in emergency care was developed to fill gaps in medical rotas and ensure safe patient care. This means that the traditional junior and middle grade medical roles in acute medicine can be replaced by suitably trained clinicians from a variety of backgrounds. A composite workforce model is also in place across sexual health services in Cumbria.

As well as attracting recruits from outside Cumbria, the Trusts are also developing skills within the local area. New roles have been developed with local education providers including physician associates - a professional role that's new in the UK. The physician associate training programme is delivered with the University of Central Lancashire and Health Education England and sees post graduates with a variety of degrees go through a two year programme and become assistants to medical staff in a variety of health care settings and specialties.

In addition, advanced clinical roles allow nurses to develop their skills to cover posts that are covered by medical staff elsewhere. This has been particularly successful in dementia care where an increase in patients living with dementia and a shortage of psychiatrists put the service under a lot of pressure. Thanks to the advanced nursing roles Cumbria now has the only nurse led dementia assessment unit in Europe which has been recognised internationally for the benefits it has brought to patient care.

The programme features staff from CPFT and North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust who are working closer together to provide more seamless care for patients and in doing so have been able to develop medical roles that span across the health system. Professor John Howarth, Deputy CEO at CPFT and NCUH, added:

"We have some really exciting opportunities in Cumbria and it's great to see them being recognised nationally. By working together as one system we are continuing to make improvements to patient care as well as creating unique opportunities for our workforce."

ITN Productions is ITN's bespoke production hub. The programme is introduced by national newsreader Natasha Kaplinsky and features key industry interviews and news-style reports along with sponsored editorial profiles. It will be shared widely through the Royal Society of Medicine which aims to advance health through education and innovation.

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