



AMACDT and Medical College Trainee Representatives Discuss Trainee Involvement in College Governance

12 December 2024

The third AMA Trainee Forum of the year was held on Thursday 12 December 2024. Chair of the AMA Council of Doctors in Training (CDT), Dr Sanjay Hettige, facilitated a discussion on trainee involvement in college governance with trainee representatives and trainee chairs from specialist medical colleges attending.

Reflections and Discussion

The importance of genuine and well-supported representation on committees and boards was highlighted and shared amongst members. Participants discussed how their colleges facilitate trainee involvement in governance practices, including the extent to which trainees are represented and involved in college committees/boards, and support provided to trainees involved in college governance.

Noting that broad distinctions exist between colleges, trainees agree that strong trainee representation improves outcomes for trainees and increases morale amongst doctors in training. Unfortunately, many trainees feel that positive improvements have often occurred in the aftermath of a crisis rather than proactively, despite the clear benefits of increased trainee involvement in college governance. For colleges with many subspecialties, extra complexities arise to ensure that the diversity of perspectives is heard.

Benefits of increased trainee involvement in decision making and governance

Trainees broadly agreed that trainee involvement in governance leads to increased morale and improved outcomes for trainees. Colleges with trainee representation on their boards report better leadership decisions across the college structure, improved communication between trainees and college leadership and increased investment by trainees in college processes. Trainee representatives expressed a strong desire for full voting rights for trainees and trainee representation on the board of directors, with these rights leading to greater engagement by trainees in college processes and outcomes.

Diversity of representation

Diversity of representation, including from trainee membership throughout the college structure and at the Board level, is believed to lead to better leadership decisions and greater engagement from trainees. Equitable membership with other College members, such as fellows, is essential so that trainees have full voting rights and can hold positions on the Board. Trainees report that colleges with robust female representation and diversity tend to have better relationships with their trainees.

Investment in training and collaboration

Trainees emphasised the importance of appropriate governance training for trainees who sit on college boards. Building strong relationships requires commitment from both trainees and board members. It is also important to ensure that the trainee voice is genuinely considered in decision-making processes, involving true collaboration and consultation from the beginning rather than tokenistic gestures.

Examples of Positive Initiatives Implemented by Colleges:

- Appointment of trainee representatives on college boards.
- Equitable membership for trainees and fellows, such that full voting rights are provided to trainees.
- Timely, free and accessible governance training for trainees on boards.
- Transparent and accessible information relating to college processes made available to trainees.
- Practical and comprehensive policies and procedures.
- Appointment of independent directors to boards.
- Receptive approach to trainee feedback.
- Diversity of gender and background in college decision making processes.
- Mentoring networks or programs.

The following Medical College Trainee committee chairs/representatives attended the Forum

- Australian Medical Association Council of Doctors in Training
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
- College of Intensive Care Medicine
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
- Royal College of Pathologists of Australia
- Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Apologies

- Australian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
- Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons
- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

Previous AMA Trainee Forum communiques

- [COVID-19 and its Impact on Specialty Training 1 June 2020](#)
- [Examination Processes 11 Aug 2020](#)
- [Contingency Planning for Exam Technical Failures 19 October 2020](#)
- [Best Practice in Trainee Representation, Engagement and Communication 28 Jan 2021](#)
- [College Assessment April 2021](#)
- [Costs of Training July 2021](#)
- [Processes for selection into training 26 October 2021](#)
- [Training through the pandemic—lessons learnt and the way forward in 2022 7 February 2022](#)
- [Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainees Progress Through Training to Fellowship 28 April 2022](#)
- [AMACDT and Medical College Trainee Representatives discuss College Initiatives to Support Flexible Training February 2023](#)
- [AMA Trainee Forum on College Initiatives to Support Women in Healthcare Leadership May 2023](#)
- [AMACDT and medical college trainee representatives discuss college processes to support resolution of issues related to training August 2023](#)
- [AMACDT and Trainees Review AMC Standards for Specialist Medical Program Accreditation March 2024](#)
- [AMACDT and medical college trainee representatives discuss best practice principles for examination and assessment feedback September 2024](#)

The AMACDT Trainee Forum is designed to increase collaboration between Specialist Medical College Trainee Committees and enhance cross specialty communication. If you have any feedback or questions, please contact us at cdt.chair@ama.com.au.

The AMACDT, chaired by Dr Sanjay Hettige, represents medical trainees throughout Australia and advocates for equitable and safe outcomes for trainees and their patients.