

# Intercalating medical students: the future is in their hands

## Editorial

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*No conflicts of interest to declare*

Accepted for publication: 30.10.19

Each year around 100 Cardiff medical students do something remarkable: they intercalate. This means they take a year out of the main MBBCh course to study for a bachelor's degree in a medically related subject, achieving something in nine months that normally takes three years.

Our students tell us that one of the highlights of intercalation is the opportunity to experience, in depth, what it is like to conduct a research project from start to finish. Planning, executing and writing up their projects gives them a deeper understanding of research methods, research integrity, laboratory and fieldwork, data analysis, literature searching, and critical appraisal of academic literature. Crucially, they also learn what it's like to work as participating members of Cardiff's world-leading research teams.

This special supplement of The British Student Doctor Journal (BSDJ) showcases some of the outstanding research work done by Cardiff's intercalators during the academic year 2018-19. The 12 articles in this issue give an overview of the scope and high standards of their work. The research questions are important, reflecting current public debates such as sports concussion amongst children; the recruitment crisis in medicine and its effect on junior doctors' career decisions; new approaches to primary care consultations; how clinicians make resuscitations decisions on very premature babies; burnout among undergraduate medical students, and the use of e-cigarettes. As might be expected from student work, some papers have a direct impact on the medical curriculum, where topics such as disability teaching, designing a modern genomic medicine syllabus and the effect of curriculum on how students approach their learning are put under the spotlight. The laboratory-focused work reported is equally important in its potential effect on the way medicine will be understood, learned and practised in the next decade: studies with implications for frontline clinical work include a review of the pharmacokinetics of caffeine intake and a study informing possible new treatments for osteoarthritis of the ankle.

Cardiff's 'C21' curriculum is one of the most modern in the UK, with a renewed focus on equipping our students with the skills, knowledge, professional values and behaviours they will need to carry medicine into the future. We listen to our students. The work that excites them and their concerns for the future of medicine and medical education directly impact how we plan and deliver our curriculum. It is therefore inspiring to read these reports. They reassure us that the future of medicine is in safe hands. As one student author observes:

*Being involved with “real-life” research and work in government has given me unique first-hand experience and undoubtedly provided me with a skill set that I would otherwise be without – and can now continue to develop. I also have a wider understanding of the ripple effect of research – not just clinically but also on wider policy. (Olivia Parish and Heather Payne, 2019)*

We wish to thank the editorial team of The BSDJ for their fantastic work in co-ordinating and producing this special supplement. The BSDJ is in itself an outstanding initiative created in 2016 and developed by a team of Cardiff medical students. Many are themselves past graduates of our intercalation programme. They started The BSDJ because of their own passion for student research and their belief that it needs a wider audience. The journal has gone from strength to strength thanks to their energy, enthusiasm and leadership. We are delighted to support them all the way, and wish The BSDJ every success as it grows and develops.



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[Journal DOI](#)

10.18573/issn.2514-3174

[Issue DOI](#)

10.18573/bsdj.v3i3

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