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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Perspectives of Portuguese pediatric trainees on their relationship with their training supervisor

Perspectivas dos estagiários de pediatria portugueses sobre seu relacionamento com o supervisor de treinamento

Teresa Almeida-Lopes[1,7,a], Ana R. Constante[2,7,b], Diana Silva[3,7,c], Isabel Brito[4,7,d], Joana Carvalho[5,7], and José Fontoura-Matias[6,7,e]*

[1]Hospital Pediátrico, Centro Hospitalar Universitário de Coimbra, Coimbra; [2]Serviço de Pediatria, Centro Hospitalar do Oeste, Caldas da Rainha; [3]Serviço de Pediatria, Centro Hospitalar de Setúbal, Setúbal; [4]Serviço de Pediatria, Hospital Garcia de Orta, Almada; [5]Serviço de Neonatologia, Maternidade Bissaya Barreto, Centro Hospitalar Universitário de Coimbra, Coimbra; [6]Serviço de Pediatria, Centro Hospitalar Universitário de São João, Porto; [7]Grupo de Internos de Pediatria (GIP), Sociedade Portuguesa de Pediatria, Lisbon. Portugal

ORCID: [a]0000-0001-6524-5402; [b]0000-0003-3133-4735; [c]0000-0002-6471-2096; [d]0000-0002-3032-5258; [e]0000-0002-7719-8831

In Portugal, during the training programme in Paediatrics, trainees have a training supervisor (TS) that guides them through their residency. This function is regulated by the Medical Internship Regulation which states that the time required to fulfil TS-related functions must be provided in their regular work schedule (maximum 3 hours per week)[1].

Given the fundamental implication of each TS in the guidance of every trainee, the Workgroup of Trainees in Paediatrics from the Portuguese Society of Paediatrics (GIP-SPP) sought to understand the paediatric trainees' perspectives on their relationship with their TS.

A short online survey was created by GIP-SPP and sent to the GIP mailing list subscribers (n = 489). The survey was open from September 18th to October 6th, 2022, and consisted of twenty-nine multiple-choice questions and one optional short-answer question to leave a personal comment.

Around 40% of our subscribers responded to the survey (n = 197). We received 62.4% of the answers from level II and 37.6% from level III hospitals, spanning from all regional health administrations in the country: North (34.5%), Centre (22.3%), Lisbon (31.5%), Alentejo/Algarve (6.1%), and Azores/Madeira (5.6%). As for the year of residency, 20.3% attended the 1st year, 20.8% the 2nd, 21.3% the 3rd, 17.3% the 4th, 16.2% the 5th and 4.1% were awaiting final evaluation.

Among these 197 trainees, 40.1% had the possibility to choose their TS and 86.1% of those stated they would choose the same TS now. Of those who did not have that opportunity, 61.9% declared to be satisfied with the TS assigned to them. Most TS only had one trainee (78.7%), while 17.3% had two and 4.1% had three. Of the trainees whose training supervisor (TS) had > 1 trainee, 19% considered that this compromised the role of their TS. Most TS (70.1%) also have the function of managing interns from other specialties and/or medical students and 9.6% of the TS are in academic training (master's degree/doctorate) or in a sub-specialty study cycle. According to some of their trainees (9.4% and 21.1% respectively), these parallel obligations compromised their performance as TS.

As for the frequency with which trainees meet their TS for matters regarding their residency, 65% meet at least every 6 months, 17.2% meet once a year and 17.8% reported meeting less often. About a third of the trainees think that their TS's availability to guide them is affected by their excessive workload.

Table 1 presents some TS-related statements graded by the trainees according to a 5-point Likert scale. The main fields in which trainees agree that their TS per- formed well are having a cooperative relationship, giving positive reinforcement for the trainee's adequate

***Correspondence:**
Teresa Almeida-Lopes
E-mail: teresalopes26@gmail.com

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Table 1. Statements about the training supervisor and the agreement of the trainees according to the Likert scale

About the TS	Fully agree	Partially agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Partially disagree	Fully disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
My TS is motivated to perform his/her function	50.8	26.4	7.1	10.2	5.6
My TS is available to perform his/her role	34.5	32.0	11.2	17.8	4.6
I have a cooperative and supportive relationship with my TS	58.4	25.9	7.6	5.6	2.5
My TS actively participates in the construction of my curriculum	37.1	33.5	9.6	15.2	4.6
My TS guides the planning of my curriculum training plan (e.g., training internships)	46.2	34.0	8.1	8.1	3.6
My TS regularly evaluates my curriculum and helps me plan my future scientific activity	24.4	28.4	13.7	21.3	12.2
My TS masters basic research methodology	24.9	21.8	24.4	21.8	7.1
My TS advises me to enrol in courses. postgraduate courses and other training programmes	33.5	29.4	11.7	16.2	9.1
My TS facilitates cooperation with peers and other health professionals to help with my training	40.1	31.5	11.2	10.2	7.1
My TS knows me (e.g., my areas of interest)	40.1	32.5	13.7	10.2	3.6
My TS flags my mistakes and the less accomplished aspects of my performance	36.0	34.0	15.2	10.2	4.6
My TS positively reinforces my adequate performance	52.8	29.9	10.7	5.1	1.5
My TS reports events that require his/her intervention to the respective director or coordinator of the medical internship	27.9	20.3	29.9	12.2	9.6

TS: training supervisor.

performance and being motivated to fulfil their role. On the other hand, trainees reported to be more dissatisfied with the lack of: regular evaluation of their curriculum to help plan future scientific activity, reporting events that require intervention from the head of department/coordinator of the residency, advice on participation in courses and domain of basic research methodology by their TS.

In the open-answer optional section, several interns mentioned how important it would be to be able to choose their own TS, instead of having one appointed by the department.

This brief survey allowed us to better understand the trainees' perspective on aspects to improve in the trainee-TS relationship. Hospitals have an essential role in these improvements, giving TS better conditions to exert their fundamental role.

We hope that this data leads to a discussion on the optimization of the trainee-TS relationship which can help improving the Portuguese medical training in Paediatrics.

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Conflicts of interest

None.

Ethical disclosures

Protection of human and animal subjects. The authors declare that the procedures followed were in accordance with the regulations of the relevant clinical research ethics committee and with those of the Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki).

Confidentiality of data. The authors declare that they have followed the protocols of their work center on the publication of patient data.

Right to privacy and informed consent. The authors have obtained the written informed consent of the patients or subjects mentioned in the article. The corresponding author is in possession of this document.

Reference

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