Reviewer's report

Title: Exposure to the field of renal transplantation during undergraduate medical education in the UK

Version: 1 Date: 31 July 2005

Reviewer: Keith Rigg

Reviewer's report:

General
1. This aim of this questionnaire study was to assess the exposure of undergraduates to the field of renal transplantation during medical education in the UK. Within the field this is a topical issue, following a British Transplantation Society sponsored meeting held in June 2004, which looked at the crisis in recruitment to kidney transplant surgery. One of the recommendations that came out of that meeting was to provide an early positive exposure to transplantation. It is important to know what exposure undergraduates in the UK get to renal transplantation. I’m not aware that this has been looked at before.

2. An eight question questionnaire was devised based on a similar tool used in otolaryngology and this is shown in figure 1. This appears to cover the relevant areas. I did find the boxes in questions 2, 3 and 4 slightly confusing and I have assumed that the columns titled 1-5 represent the year of study, but it would be helpful to have that clarified in the final version. Although the questionnaire was not validated it is encouraging that there was an excellent response and only one incomplete reply. If changes were made across the UK it would be appropriate to re-use this model.

3. The data is sound and is easily understood and presented.

4. It is noted that references 7 and 8 are duplications – hence the reference list needs to be re-formatted, as do the reference numbers after 8 in the text.

5. The discussion highlights the differences in exposure to renal transplantation by medical school, and relates this to both the recruitment of future transplant surgeons and to knowledge of organ donation. The reference to the study of a single medical school and to the views of the students, as opposed to the deans was helpful to show both the provider and the user perspective. The last line of the last paragraph could be expanded in the light of further knowledge to read ‘The BTS is currently liaising with the national Modernising Medical Careers group about this option and individual transplant units have been encouraged to submit appropriate bids to their Postgraduate Dean.’ It would be helpful to have some comment in the discussion of the author’s views of how exposure to renal transplantation should be provided in the undergraduate curriculum, particularly in the light of the variety of options provided in the UK and partly demonstrated in table 1. This would make a good closing paragraph in the discussion and may provide a starting point for action.

6. The title and abstract clearly convey what has been found.

7. The writing style is acceptable. The paper is succinct, easy to read and conveys the results and message clearly.
Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Figure 1 - I did find the boxes in questions 2, 3 and 4 slightly confusing and I have assumed that the columns titled 1-5 represent the year of study, but it would be helpful to have that clarified in the final version.

It is noted that references 7 and 8 are duplications – hence the reference list needs to be re-formatted, as do the reference numbers after 8 in the text.

Discussion - It would be helpful to have some comment in the discussion of the author’s views of how exposure to renal transplantation should be provided in the undergraduate curriculum, particularly in the light of the variety of options provided in the UK and partly demonstrated in table 1. This would make a good closing paragraph in the discussion and may provide a starting point for action.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Discussion - The last line of the last paragraph could be expanded in the light of further knowledge to read ‘The BTS is currently liaising with the national Modernising Medical Careers group about this option and individual transplant units have been encouraged to submit appropriate bids to their Postgraduate Dean.’

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I am a council member and the lead for surgical workforce issues in the British Transplantation Society.