

THE BIG QUESTION

THIS MONTH WE ASK:

Has
Modernising
Scientific
Careers
(MSC)
delivered
what it
promised?



Graham Wilson

Training Officer, Biochemistry
Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

MSC programmes were initiated by the CSO to harmonise the registration and regulation of all clinical scientists across the NHS, reassuring the public of the quality of the clinical science workforce in areas where there was often no statutory regulation. They are rightly challenging clinically and academically but the rewards to the NHS are immense.

The innovative programmes up-skill the scientific workforce and provide routes to “Consultant Clinical Scientist” acknowledged by Medical Royal Colleges as equivalent to their medical counterparts. STP and HSST are helping to develop scientists to deliver 21st century diagnostic services and innovation. The Topol technology review is an example where visible scientific leadership will be required.

The training programmes provide opportunities across life sciences, but sadly there are areas where the buy-in isn't there – particularly cell sciences and haematology. Change is difficult for some and there has been resistance. Despite this, there are successful examples of scientists moving on to higher levels.

If I could change anything it would be for a higher level of engagement from all life science professionals and more support or less resistance from some professional bodies. I'm sure programmes will evolve, but there is no doubt in my mind that the programmes have and will continue to deliver, thanks to the many professionals supporting the delivery.

IMAGE: GETTY



Chris Murphy

Associate Dean, Faculty
of Science and Engineering
University of Hull

For some areas, there have arguably been some successes, but concerning biomedical science, for me the answer is “no”.

Attempting to get more recognition for healthcare scientists can only be viewed as a positive, but trying to treat this very varied group of workers as the same was, in my opinion, overly ambitious and a mistake.

At the time of its launch, biomedical scientists already had registered status and a clear and proven educational pathway to achieve this. MSC had nothing to offer the profession and for several years simply caused confusion. At the time, I was the programme leader of a very successful commissioned biomedical science degree course, which placed 30 to 35 students into laboratory placements with around 60% to 70% of these going on to become biomedical scientists. MSC halted this programme (and others) and set in place the Practitioner Training Programme.

Given my background, links with our placement providers and the desire to train future biomedical scientists, we set up a programme and worked hard to make it a success. Unfortunately (and we were not alone), despite our best efforts, we have withdrawn the programme after only three cohorts; the programme was not popular with students or laboratory staff and was resource-heavy. In conclusion, biomedical science didn't need MSC and, in the end, has managed very well despite it.



Andrew Usher

Laboratory Manager
Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

MSC promised a new way of training and a career escalator. You could come in at the bottom and work your way up, but only for a few. Most of us working in labs haven't seen any real change. Trainees still come in with a biomedical science degree and gain registration. Despite promising change and a new career pathway, for the majority, the structures have been reinforced and the promised modernisation hasn't happened.

*The promise of
being able to
reach consultant
scientist –
that hasn't
been fulfilled*