



Adding Life to Years

**A career in
geriatric
medicine**

*combining intellectual challenge with
human interest*

What are the attractions of geriatric medicine?

It is clinically very satisfying; rehabilitating older people to independence following illness or injury is rewarding.

It combines intellectual challenge with human interest.

It deals with the whole person and their family, as well as diseases.

It takes the hospital doctor into the community more than most specialties.

It is challenging and enjoyable to lead a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team.



Geriatric medicine offers a rewarding career.

What is special about physicians in geriatric medicine?

They practise general medicine for older patients requiring good general medical skills.

They know the effect of age on the human body and the limitations of physiological reserve.

They recognise the non-specific presentation of disease in the older person.

They work in a multi-disciplinary team jointly with nurses, therapists and social services.

They work in many different settings and with many different teams in the hospital and community.

They require clinical, practical, organisational, managerial and personal skills

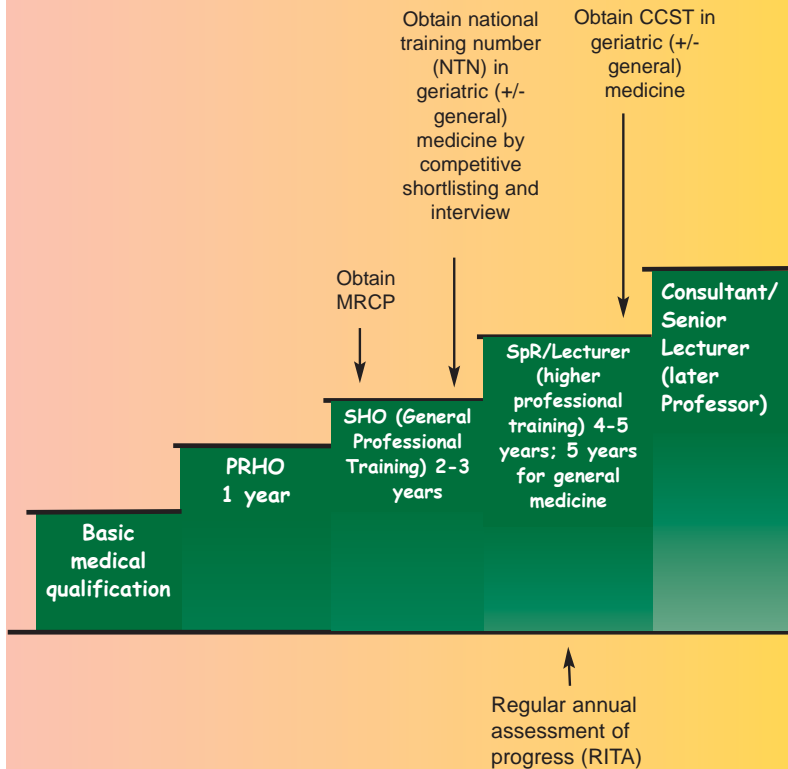
They may develop special interests in areas such as stroke, Parkinson's disease, dementia, falls, faints, incontinence, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disease, respiratory disease, osteoporosis, pharmacology, clinical ethics and service organisation.





What is involved in training for a career in geriatric medicine?

This diagram illustrates the stages on the way to a consultant appointment in geriatric medicine in the UK



PRHO: Pre-registration House Officer
SHO: Senior House Officer
SpR: Specialist Registrar



Are there opportunities for research and teaching?

The specialty offers limitless fields for research and teaching.

There are many opportunities to undertake research in a variety of sub-specialties within geriatric medicine.

The timing of entry to research and academic posts is often determined by opportunity, such as the availability of a grant or the occurrence of a vacancy.

Many trainees take one year out in research or longer, to obtain a higher degree.

One year of research can count towards the award of a CCST.

Are there opportunities for part-time training or training abroad?

There are opportunities for flexible training for those wishing to work part time.

The length of training is increased in flexible posts in proportion to the hours worked.

Entry to flexible training positions at SpR level is by open competition with people who are undertaking full-time training.

Flexible training must include a minimum of 5 sessions per week and pro-rata on call and emergency duties.

At the time of publication there are 175 women in the specialty, 23 of whom are registered part time.

For those wishing to do some training abroad, it is possible to spend some time as an SHO, but Royal College approval will be needed to count this towards General Professional Training. Up to one year of training overseas as an SpR (Specialist Registrar) can count towards training and may well be encouraged. It may either be in a research post or a clinical post, in which case it will need to be approved for training in the relevant country. Prior approval of the Royal College will be required.



What are the working conditions of a consultant geriatrician?

There is a nationally agreed salary scale for consultants in the UK.

Trusts can award discretionary points (to consultants who have excelled in additional work) which are additions to salary.

Nationally, Merit Awards (which are to be replaced by Clinical Excellence awards) also provide additions to salary for exceptional work.

The standard working week is made of 11 sessions of 3.5 hours, but most consultants in most specialties actually work more hours than this.

Many geriatricians are on call for all adult medical emergency admissions with an on call frequency varying from 1 in 5 to 1 in 10 or more.

Hours of work of SpRs are regulated by the European Working Time Directive which by 2009 will lead to a maximum 48-hour working week. As a result, most SpRs will work evening shifts with a frequency between 1 in 4 and 1 in 10; and night shifts with a frequency of 1 in 8 or less often.



There are opportunities to be involved in private practice, with the work often orientated towards sub-specialty interests.

The Royal Colleges inspect all training posts to ensure adequate standards of teaching and supervision and good working conditions.

Where can I go for further information?

The British Geriatrics Society which is the professional organisation of geriatricians and supports training and education, research and audit and clinical and practice policy.

Tel: 020 7608 1369. Website: www.bgs.org.uk

The career focus article, "A career in geriatric medicine" BMJ 2002;324:S57 (23 February) website: tinyurl.com/M79p (don't use www or http)

Other useful websites include those of The Royal Colleges of Physicians:

www.rcplondon.ac.uk (particularly for more information on part-time training)

www.rcpe.ac.uk

www.rcpsglasg.ac.uk

And the JCHMT home page:

www.rcplondon.ac.uk/jchmt (particularly for more information on research)



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