

Real life story - consultant interview

Dr Helen Jewitt is a consultant anaesthetist in South Wales. She told us about her experiences of the consultant application and interview process.

Dr Helen Jewitt Consultant anaesthetist
Employer or university Newport Hospital
Salary range Over £65K

The road to being a consultant

Becoming a consultant was a natural progression and the implicit end-point to my training. As well as hard work, you'll need a great CV and the ability to succeed at interview, but the opportunities are certainly there.

It's all about making connections with the consultants in your specialty, perhaps via committees or social activities. The nature of hospital medicine means that you'll become known by consultants in different hospitals that you have worked in. Make direct contact with the deputy clinical director towards the end of your training to enquire about possible opportunities.

It is important to face the application and interview process positively from the start. Although applying for a promotion is stressful, there's no place for negative thinking.

Preparing for interview

Towards the end of my training, I took a consultant selection course run by the Wales Deanery. I found the course and timing to be absolutely right for me. It covered CV presentation, interview methods and mock interview practice. The timing was perfect as it gave me the practical experience I needed. Always take advantage of these opportunities whenever they are available. I also attended a private course which provided consultant interview training, which I found helpful.

There are various things to consider and prepare for. You should think about:

- what is important to me about this hospital and the job?
- what can I offer to the department?
- what changes are happening that might affect me?

I also visited the department informally on two or three occasions and spoke to as many people as possible. I also trawled the Health Board intranet for topical issues and initiatives.

The interview process has an important preparation stage built in and all short-listed candidates are invited to meet as many of the interview board as possible before the day of the panel. There may only be a few days in which to do this but it's an important part of the application. Not everyone on the panel will be available and some turn down all requests, but many do expect you to meet with them and it's your responsibility to

arrange it. And as they are very senior, busy people who don't have lots of free time in their diary, it isn't easy to do.

Meeting the most senior people in the hospital can be very daunting. I was initially worried that I needed to be knowledgeable about each area, but I quickly found out that this wasn't the case. The panel members were keen to assist me and helpfully brought our conversations around to the key issues. These meetings helped me to be better informed, which was a big help during the interview itself.

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My advice

Conditions are constantly changing and for current trainees; the opportunities may be slightly fewer and competition slightly higher, so be prepared to work very hard and really, really want the job – be passionate about it and show that passion to others. People notice.

Be more flexible about the end to training. It may be that people will need to undertake post-CCT [1] training to enhance their skills and set themselves apart from others. Indeed, I considered such actions myself but in the end my post came up and it wasn't necessary.

The requirement is for interpretation and personal thinking for your interview. During training we have to gather factual information and regurgitate it as required. The interview is not like an examination and therefore preparation requires a different approach. Of course, you need to do lots of research and reading, but after you have read a report or document, ask yourself: What does this mean to me, to my setting, to my appointment? Also practice talking, forming and expressing opinions, explaining and justifying your point of view. Make sure you can talk about yourself and your own achievements.

Final word

Talk to a recently appointed consultant, ideally in your specialty as panels vary from place to place. Find out what questions they were asked as people are really helpful; and it's good to know that you are not alone.

Find out more about the consultant interview by watching our video. [2]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/medical-specialty-training/real-life-story-consultant-interview>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CCT>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/currently-working-health/information-doctors/medical-specialty-training/consultant-interview>