

Real-life stories (SEM)

This page has real-life stories relating to the specialty.

Read both case studies of SEM trainees at ST4.

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Case study one: ?Dr A.R. ? SEM ST4

I chose to follow a career in SEM while still at medical school.? The opportunity to enter specialist training in SEM arose while I was a surgical trainee and required me to change to a General Internal Medicine training programme and start again at ST1 level.? My interest in sport came from playing rugby for many years and being asked many questions of my team mates as a medical student to which I didn't have the answers.? Interestingly other doctors didn't seem to have all the answers either and from that point on I developed an interest in musculoskeletal and sports injuries.

Having almost completed 2 years of SEM training, I have been through a variety of specialities including general practice, public health, orthopaedics and emergency medicine.? This type of training gives a good general base with future years more focused on sports medicine specifically.? Being the first and only trainee in SEM in my area, I have to take responsibility for my own training goals within each specialty I work in.? This is both challenging and rewarding.? SEM brings with it many varied opportunities not available in the average medical job and I have had the opportunity to work in many specialties within the NHS and be involved in many sports from boxing to horse racing and ice hockey.

From a personal point of view, I have a great interest and enthusiasm for musculoskeletal injuries and feel that SEM has the potential to greatly benefit the treatment of conditions that are often ignored or avoided by other specialties.? Exercise medicine is an area of SEM under development that is widely under-valued by health care professionals at present despite a wealth of evidence.? The health benefits of exercise are massive and if fully appreciated, could make an enormous difference to the health and quality of life of both individuals and populations.

As a trainee in SEM, you need to be motivated and enthusiastic and it is a career that carries fantastic opportunities but significant uncertainty over future employment.? Opportunities for training and research are growing daily and will increase in the approach to the London 2012 Olympics but again be prepared to fund some of these yourself.? This is the perfect time to get involved in this new and exciting specialty.

Case study two: ?Dr C.C. ? SEM ST4

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted a career in medicine. This made my choices at school relatively easy. While friends were debating what subjects to pick for GCSE or A-Level, I knew exactly what to do, and what grades were required. With a keen, active interest in sports such as judo, football and

Gaelic football, it was only natural that I would be interested in pursuing a career in sports medicine. In the early stages of medical school this seemed like an unrealistic goal, with sports medicine appearing to be an unattainable, 'glamorous' career. It wasn't until I undertook a Special Study Modules in Sport and Exercise medicine (SEM) that I became aware of just how much the specialty had to offer. There was more to SEM than just running onto the pitch on a Saturday afternoon!

At this point, I decided to focus on a career in SEM. As an undergraduate, I successfully applied to do a Research Internship at NISMAT (Nicholas Institute of Sports Medicine and Athletic Trauma) in New York during the summer between 3rd and 4th year of my medical degree. This gave me my first experience of research and emphasised the importance of practicing evidence-based sports medicine.

By the time I had completed my PRHO year, SEM was still not a recognised specialty in the UK. I decided to travel to Australia to get more experience in relevant specialties, with a view to entering the Australian SEM training programme. I worked in Emergency medicine, Orthopaedics and ICU. During this year, SEM received recognition as a medical specialty in the UK and the first cohort of StRs were enrolled, so I decided to return to the UK to pursue a career at home.

To gain further experience, I took a year out of work and undertook a full-time MSc in SEM. This was a fantastic way to increase my knowledge of the specialty and allowed me to carry out my own research. Following this, I completed 2 years of Core Medical Training (CMT). I was lucky in securing placements in Rheumatology and Cardiology. Throughout this time, I was also actively involved in medical cover for a variety of sports teams and sporting events.

After completing CMT, I obtained a training post in SEM. I am now into my second year of specialist training and have worked in Public health, GP, A&E and Orthopaedics. In all of my posts I have been supernumerary to the rota. This means the focus is much more on training rather than service provision. It also means no more on-calls! It takes a while to get used to the basic salary - but the quality of life more than makes up for it! It also frees up more time to dedicate to team and event cover, which often occur at the weekends.

I couldn't recommend the specialty highly enough. The training opportunities and variety of experiences afforded to us are unmatched by any other specialty. I believe that as experts in musculoskeletal medicine, we are perfectly placed to deal not only with sport-related injuries, but also to relieve the pressure on orthopaedic surgeons, as the majority of conditions seen in outpatients can usually be managed conservatively. It has been stated that physical inactivity is the major public health disaster of our generation. The benefits of regular physical activity cover almost all chronic diseases and we are also ideally placed to safely prescribe exercise for primary and secondary prevention of disease. We will also have a role in education of our colleagues and undergraduate students on the importance of regular physical activity and how best to encourage people to be more active.

When people ask for my advice on how to get involved in SEM, I always recommend getting involved in as many aspect of sports medicine or exercise medicine as possible. Get exposure to as many sports as possible, working with athletes of all levels and ages. Make it clear by your CV that SEM is unquestionably what you want to do. You will need to be motivated and pro-active in your training as much of the experience you require will not be available in the traditional hospital setting. I would also advise attending the BASEM annual congress and taking the faculty diploma in SEM through FSEM(UK).

Where exactly the future of an SEM consultant lies remains uncertain at present. However, I believe that the skills we have to offer and the numerous opportunities available mean exciting times lie ahead!

Other case-studies

Read this RCPE case study of an ST5 trainee in sports and exercise medicine? [1]

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Links

[1] <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/careers-resource/sports-exercise-medicine-sem>