

Inequalities of provision of nationally funded clinical academic training opportunities for healthcare professionals: quantitative comparisons across the four nations of the UK

Background



There is a common perception that national investment in clinical academic training awards in England far outweighs that in the three devolved UK nations. We tested the veracity of this perception.

Methods

FOI requests were sent to government agencies in each nation that fund clinical academic training for healthcare professionals (medics and dentists excluded). Data were sought on the number of awards provided, the WTE salaries and durations applicable, and the expenditure entailed for each year in the period 2017-2022. Award data was broken down into: internship, pre-doctoral, pre-doctoral bridging, doctoral, post-doctoral bridging, and post-doctoral. Standardised per capita comparisons were made between nations.

Main Results

Table 1. Ratio comparisons between nations on key standardised metrics 2017-2022 with Scotland as the reference

				
Mean no. of awards p.a. per capita	3.57	1.00	4.08	1.31
Mean WTE award years p.a. per capita	7.51	1.00	2.76	2.89
Mean expenditure p.a. per capita	6.34	1.00	2.26	2.56

Conclusions

In this period, healthcare professionals in the UK experienced marked inequalities of access to nationally funded clinical academic training awards depending on the nation in which they worked, especially in Scotland. Strategic approaches focusing on opportunities across the whole career pathway, particularly in the three devolved nations, are recommended to achieve greater cross-national parity.

Scotland spent less than a sixth of that spent by England per capita on nationally funded clinical academic training awards for healthcare professionals (excluding medics) from 2017 to 2022.

Scotland's spending on such awards was also less than half of that spent by both Wales and Northern Ireland per capita in this period.

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Additional Tables

Table 2. Number of awards 2017-2022 by nation and category of award

	Eng*	Scot	Wal	NI
Award category				
Internship	232	0	31	0
Pre-doctoral	181	6	9	0
Pre-doctoral bridging	132	0	0	5
Doctoral	119	1	4	5
Post-doctoral bridging	52	0	0	0
Post-doctoral	96	15	8	0
All awards	812	22	52	10

*Data on internships and bridging awards provided by only four (London, South East, South West, Midlands) of the seven Health Education England regions

Table 3. Populations (mid-2020) and mean number of awards per annum per million capita 2017-2022 by nation

	Eng*	Scot	Wal	NI
Population (millions)	56.55	5.47	3.17	1.90
Award category				
Internship	0.82	0.00	1.96	0.00
Pre-doctoral	0.64	0.22	0.57	0.00
Pre-doctoral bridging	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.53
Doctoral	0.42	0.04	0.25	0.53
Post-doctoral bridging	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00
Post-doctoral	0.34	0.55	0.50	0.00
All awards	2.87	0.80	3.28	1.06

*Data on internships and bridging awards provided by only four (London, South East, South West, Midlands) of the seven Health Education England regions

Table 4. Expenditure (£millions) on awards 2017-2022 by nation

	Eng	Scot	Wal	NI
Total	76.978	1.174	1.536	1.040
Mean p.a. per million capita	0.272	0.043	0.097	0.110

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