

Taster evenings

A brief introduction to clinical oncology

Taster evenings are an excellent way to provide a brief introduction to the specialty for foundation or core trainees that may be interested but know little about it.

While comprehensive week-long tasters should be arranged wherever possible, and these smaller events should not be seen as a replacement for those, evening events can act as a starting point to pique interest and get junior trainees thinking about oncology as an option for their future career.

What to include

Exactly how such an event is structured, what it includes and how it operates will depend entirely on the facilities and staff available in each centre but talks or activities you could consider include:

- Tour of the radiotherapy suite including CT planning, the mould room and treatment machines. Make it interactive and show how the linacs operate.
- A demonstration of RT planning. Include an opportunity for attendees to have a go.
- Talk from a current trainee and/or consultant on what training/working as a clinical oncologist entails. Allow time for a Q&A.
- Hints and tips session. Offer advice on how to get more experience of the specialty (full-week tasters etc); how to get involved in oncology focussed audits/research projects to prepare for applying to the specialty.

For an example of the kind of event that can be organised read the case study below from two trainees in Bristol who set up such an evening.

How the College can support you

The College can provide you with some physical materials to hand out to attendees at such an event. We have leaflets about a career in clinical oncology as well as promotional items. If you would like any of these sent to you just email clinicalcareers@rcr.ac.uk

There is also a template PowerPoint presentation available to download from the website <https://www.rcr.ac.uk/clinical-oncology-careers/resources>. This can either be used as it is or as a basis for you to build your own.

See overleaf for a case study from Severn.

Insight into Oncology Evening in Severn

Organised by Dr Casswell (ST5 Clinical Oncology) and Dr Von Brockdorff (ST7 Clinical Oncology), with support from (and much appreciation to) Jancis Kinsman, senior radiographer.

How we set it up

Firstly we attended a 'patient information evening' which is aimed at preparing patients for radiotherapy treatment. We then based our introductory talk and tour of the department on this.

We held discussions with the radiology department and the senior radiographer who kindly agreed to help us on the evening.

Once the programme was developed we emailed all the relevant groups of doctors with information about the event and invited them to register.

Rooms and refreshments had to be booked and material prepared. These included PowerPoint presentations but also attendance certificates.

The programme

18:15 – 18:30 Arrival and registration

18:30 – 19:15 Following a quick powerpoint about radiotherapy treatment there was a tour of the radiology department led by senior radiographer, covering the journey from CT planning to mould room to treatment machine. This session was interactive and we asked attendees to lie on the couch while we demonstrated gantry movements etc.

19:15 – 19:45 We had set up the computers to demonstrate outlining to the attendees and they all had the opportunity to have a go.

19:45 – 20:30 Registrar led powerpoint and discussion which focused on training, the structure and varied aspects of the job and gave attendees the opportunity to ask questions.

Feedback

There were 10 attendees, all of whom rated the event as very good and found it very useful in providing information about the specialty. All ten also rated the practical aspects of the programme as good or very good. Free text feedback highlighted the tour, practical demonstration of radiotherapy treatment and the hands-on radiotherapy planning as most attendees favourite parts of the evening. The final session focussing on the training was also well-received. All attendees said they would recommend the event to their friends and all said it had helped to further their interest in the specialty.