

Not Staying the Course – What can be made of attrition within Pre-Registration Operating Department Practitioner Programmes?



Mike Donnellon CODP

Background

Attrition rates within Pre-Registration Operating Department Practitioner (ODP) programmes have remained stubbornly high over a number of years. In a study by Smith (2006), average attrition rates amongst 14 programmes was reported at 34%. Hinton and Jinks (2009) identified an attrition rate of 22.8% averaged over three consecutive cohorts within one Higher Education Institution (HEI) programme. More recently, Health Education England regional ODP Workforce Action Groups have described attrition rates of over 40% within some local HEI ODP programmes.

Causes of student attrition are multifactorial. Hamshire et al (2017) highlight that individual experiences influenced by personal factors, academic factors and outside influences all combine to create an individual set of circumstances that can either contribute to a negative experience or assist student success. Dissatisfaction with practice placement learning can also accelerate a student's decision to withdraw from a programme.

Aims

The aims of the study were to identify the contributing factors and contributing patterns of why student Operating Department Practitioners withdraw from their programme of study.

Method

Attendees (n=50) at two College of Operating Department Practitioner (CODP) Clinical and University Educator Forums (n=24) (n=26) comprising of HEI ODP Programme Team members, Lead Practice Educators and Practice Educators from placement providers completed an online survey accessed via a QR code to mobile devices. A mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data was utilised.

Reasons ODP Students Withdraw From Programmes

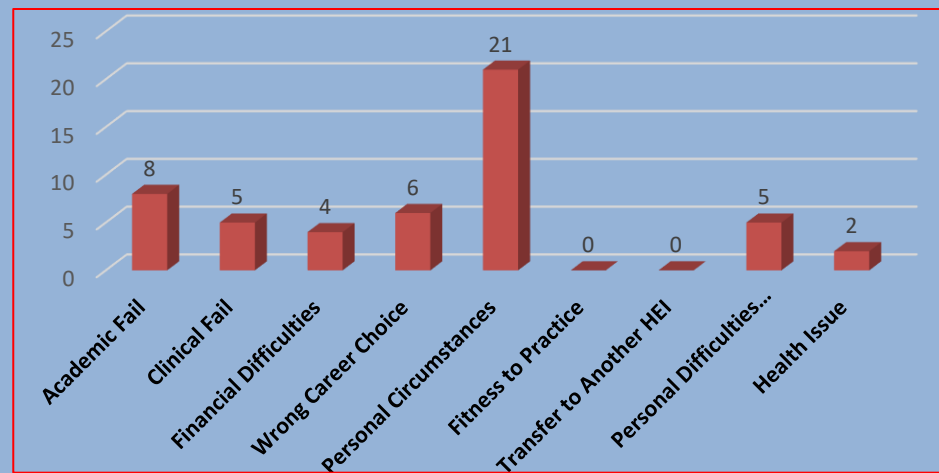


Figure 1

Year in Which Students Leave

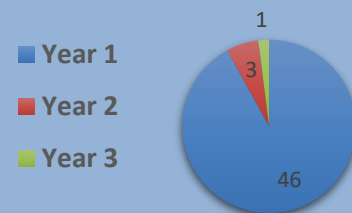


Figure 2

Did Covid-19 Cause a Higher Incidence of Attrition

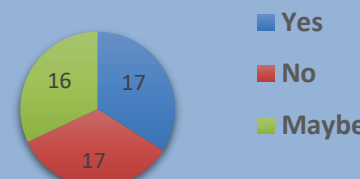


Figure 3

Results

- 21 (42%) of attendees ranked Personal Circumstances as the main reason why ODP students withdraw from their programme (Figure 1). This reflects the findings within the RePAIR report (HEE, 2018). If a student had withdrawn from their programme due to health issues, 43 (86%) of attendees identified that this had been related to mental health issues rather than physical health.
- 46 (92%) of attendees believed Year 1 of an ODP programme has the highest level of attrition (Figure 2), and only 8 (16%) indicated that students returned to their programme if they had a period of intercalation / interruption.
- Asked if during the period of COVID-19 did they think that there had been a higher incidence of students withdrawing from their programmes of study (Figure 3), attendees were undecided with 17 (34%) stating Yes, 17 (34%) stating No and 16 (32%) stating Maybe.

ODP Apprentices

Attendees believed attrition amongst ODP Apprentices is far less than undergraduate student ODPs due to:

- Recruited from the Theatre Support Workforce therefore aware of the ODP role, expectations and culture of operating departments.
- Receiving a salary therefore finances easier to manage.

References

Hamshire, C., Barrett, N., Langan, M., Harris, E., Wibberley, C. (2017) Students perceptions of their learning experiences: A repeat regional survey of healthcare students. *Nurse Education Today*, 49, pp. 168–173.

Health Education England (HEE) (2018) *Reducing Pre-registration Attrition and Improving Retention Report (RePAIR)*. London: HEE

Hinton, J., Jinks, A. (2009) Operating Department Practitioner education: A retrospective audit of factors associated with attrition. *Journal of Advanced Perioperative Care*, 4(1), pp. 43-49

Smith, M. (2006) Why do ODP students leave. *Journal of Operating Department Practice*, 3(3), p.18