



THE ASSOCIATION OF ANAESTHETISTS

of Great Britain & Ireland

Dr A Tomlinson
Chairman
Training Committee
The Royal College of Anaesthetists
Churchill House
35 Red Lion Square
London
WC1R 4SG

Monday 27th July 2009

Dear Dr Tomlinson,

I write as an elected member of the Group of Anaesthetists in Training (GAT) Committee regarding training and the implications of the European Working Time Regulations.

The continuing assessment of anaesthetic training is based on workplace assessments and either the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) or the Record of In Training Assessment (RITA). The GAT Committee are concerned that inter-school variance in these processes may not adequately assess, to a national standard, trainee education and ability, or indeed, provide quality assurance for the training that junior anaesthetists receive. We would ask whether the Royal College of Anaesthetists has considered the issue as a potential problem? Specifically, what quality assurance tools are used by the College to ensure that trainee and training standards have not been affected since the introduction of European Working Time Regulation (EWTR) legislation? We feel this issue is particularly important given the imminence of the 48-hour working week.

GAT recently published results of our annual trainee on-call survey in *Anaesthesia News*¹. Full results are available on our website. Twenty-nine percent of respondents (an increase from nineteen percent in 2005/06²) stated that they had spent time in

¹ *Anaesthesia News Jan 09; 258; 17-19*

² *Anaesthesia News May 06; 226; 24-25*

theatre outside of their contracted hours to gain experience and competencies, which, due to time constraints, they were unable to receive within their training programme. We are sure that the Training Committee will agree this is an unacceptable situation. In addition, these trainees may well be exposing themselves to litigation.

The Royal College of Anaesthetists pioneered the introduction of its competency-based training system replacing the more traditional time-based system. However, the logbook report required at ARCP and RITA reviews only the number of cases and unfortunately does not reflect the quality of the training. 77% of the respondents to our survey felt their exposure to cases had decreased; deterioration from 72% in our 2005/06 survey. With the 48-hour average working week coming into effect from August 2009 there is significant reduction in supervised or teaching daytime theatre lists, given the need to continue provision of out of hours work. Are there measures the College can encourage to prevent the reduction in training theatre lists?

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicholas J. Love". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nicholas Love
GAT Committee Member