

SAS Page

Proud to be an SAS anaesthetist!

Staff and associate specialist (SAS) doctors are important members of any department, especially in anaesthesia, and in many hospitals they make an enormous contribution to service work.

Doctors who choose to enter the SAS grade have multifactorial reasons. Some enter from different training systems as the SAS route provides a means for secure employment; some have child care or family responsibilities and choose the SAS grade to achieve the balance between the clinical workload and family life, and others do not wish to take on the role of consultant with the attendant responsibilities and duties.

For myself, juggling work and parenthood has been a major challenge. There was the pressure to fulfill my parental duties and family commitments along with my job responsibilities. It has been a bumpy career ride for me as I moved with my family, starting with my first job as an SHO some years ago. There were many challenges, such as examinations, interview preparation, job interviews, and changing posts for the sake of career progression, while fulfilling tiring on call commitments - even if the rotas did comply with the EWTD.

There were times when my son used to look through the window at night, eagerly waiting for me to come home after finishing my long days, waiting for me to put him to bed. I am sure all working parents face these problems; like them I have always felt it was important to give priority to my children and my family. The first thing I had to do when I reached home was to spend time with my sons, before preparing for another long day! Are our children expecting too much from us? Is it their bad luck that they are born to professionals in demanding jobs? No! They just want to spend time with their parents, mothers in

particular – quality as well as quantity. The guilty feeling was always there.

As an SAS anaesthetist, I have now found a job in a department where I feel valued and challenged, and where there is a balance between work life and family commitments, and a welcome sense of stability. I go to work with a smile on my face, I don't feel I am letting anyone down, and I feel that I am a valued member of the team, both at work and at home. I work four fixed days, without on calls, which gives me enough time for my family along with my busy work schedule. In the past few years I have been involved in teaching and research, I attend a pre-assessment clinic for high risk obstetric patients, I have published my work, and I have recently become an SAS representative for the AAGBI.

There are of course downsides and frustrations to an SAS post that have to be acknowledged. It is important to look at your post in a positive way and to be realistic about what is achievable. In that way, you can enjoy the job more, and not be the victim of your own expectations. In the NHS, money is generally not the sole driver of getting you out of bed in the morning, passion for the job is; but not everyone loves every aspect of their job. It's a matter of finding strong positive points that you can focus on. If you're unfulfilled, you're more likely to be unhappy in all areas of your life – not just your work.

It is important to identify what you can achieve within your role as an SAS doctor. It is not the same duties that you perform as listed in your job description. Everyone with the same job has these! Think of something extra that you can do to benefit your patients, yourself, and the organization.

To increase job satisfaction, keep your

boundaries intact and be respectful because in turn, you'll likely receive respect. Most conflicts in life are two-sided, which means you could be contributing to your low job satisfaction in some way. Keep your personal life separate. If you're in crisis at home, leave your emotions at home – or at least in your car. As we know every human being is different. There are personality differences. The beauty and misery of being human is that we have different communication styles, points of view, and ways of thinking. People don't always think the way that you do.

I have found that the following have helped me in my career:

- Be honest.
- Stay professional
- Maintain respect, of yourself and others.
- Be polite and even-tempered. Treat your angry boss or difficult co-workers with respect all the time, whether you feel like it or not!
- Find yourself a mentor, someone you like and trust.

On a more practical front, there are things that you can target specifically and achieve with some effort and by going that extra mile. It may be difficult to find the extra time on top of your routine workload and outside commitments, but you should have a minimum of one programmed activity (PA) within your contract for additional activities like research, audit or administration.

Being enthusiastic, proactive, motivated and hard working have helped me to become a proud SAS doctor!

Here are some of the suggestions which have been published previously in *Anaesthesia News*¹ and which I have found to be extremely valuable in my career:

Locally at the trust level:

1. Teaching:
 - a. Get involved in teaching trainees (registrars and senior house officers, speciality trainees), nurses, midwives, operating department practitioners and paramedics.
 - b. Apply to the Royal College of Anaesthetists for SAS approval to teach.
 - c. If you specialise in something like TIVA, ultrasound guided nerve blocks or chronic pain, train the trainees and others, including consultants.
2. Become an honorary lecturer at the University:

This involves teaching undergraduate medical students. You can also become an OSCE examiner and help in OSCE writing. You can also do a university OSCE examiner day workshop.

3. Audit and research:

This is a continuous process. Keep a logbook of your cases, audit your own practices and use these summaries for your annual appraisal. Almost anything can be the subject of an audit (from patient satisfaction under regional anaesthesia to swearing habits of the surgeons!). The RCOA audit recipe book is a good point to start for ideas. Become the lead in your department for one of these audits. Think about publication of your findings, an oral paper, poster or written paper. How many times you have looked at an abstract book and thought, "I could do that too"? Publicise your ideas and your good work! The AAGBI has an audit and research prize exclusively for SAS doctors. Remember, time management is important and you must plan your projects. Talk over your ideas with an experienced member of the department.

4. Career progression:

The new contract provides for career progression within the SAS grade post. SAS doctors may also apply to move back into specialist registrar training posts if they wish to become a consultant.

5. Help organise a course at your base hospital or via the AAGBI.
6. Apply to have your additional contributions recognised.

Optional points can be awarded by your local trust once you reach the top of the pay scale. You are expected to demonstrate skills and expertise beyond what would normally be expected of the grade.

Nationally:

1. Lecture on your sub-specialty
2. Apply to become the SAS Representative at AAGBI or the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

Internationally:

1. Help in developing countries.
2. Write a tutorial for Anaesthesia Tutorial of the Week for the World Anaesthesia Society (www.worldanaesthesia.org) or Update in Anaesthesia, the journal of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA)

It is your job to make sure that you are happy in whatever you are doing. There is help available if needed. Life is short, enjoy every moment! This is my attitude towards my family, job, colleagues, patients, trust and life.

Smita Oswal
AAGBI SAS committee

Reference:

1. Dr Rajesh Kumar: A Dead – end Job? Not Quite, *Anaesthesia News*, June 2007: 239: 28-29



4th Oxford Paediatric Difficult Airway Workshop

Thursday 14th May 2009

The Paediatric Difficult Intubation Workshop is for trainees and consultants who anaesthetise children and wish to refresh and update skills in managing children with a difficult airway. The course aims to discuss the management of the anticipated and unanticipated paediatric difficult airway. The format of the day is one of short interactive lectures, videos and hands-on small group workshops. The workshops cover care and basic use of the fibre-optic laryngoscope, modified airway and LMA access techniques using guidewires and exchange catheters.

Delegate numbers are limited to 24 places to allow maximum opportunity to interact and interrogate the faculty.

Early booking recommended.

Registration fee includes refreshments and lunch.

Course organisers: Dr David G. Mason, Dr Mansukh T Popat and Dr Stuart W Benham

Registration Fee: £220 5 CEPD points

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Cheques payable to "Paediatric Anaesthesia & Resuscitation Fund"