Child Health Summer School: 
Increasing interest in a career in Paediatrics

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Introduction
Paediatrics is an under subscribed medical specialty and figures suggest that interest continues to decline. The RCPCH rota vacancies and compliance survey from Winter 2015/2016 identified a rota vacancy rate of 10.4% on tier 1 rotas and 20.3% on tier 2 rotas. Averaged across both tiers, there has been an increase in the vacancy rate from 12.1% in January 2015 to 14.9% in January 2016.\(^1\)  
Competition ratios for 2015 and 2016 entry to the paediatric training programme at ST1 were 1.9 and 1.6 respectively, with an average competition ratio of 6.3 throughout all medical specialties in 2015.\(^2,3\) Undergraduate paediatric training is limited to 5 to 8 weeks within medical school, and present in only a minority of foundation training programmes. We have developed the child health summer school, a week long programme for 2nd year undergraduate medical students prior to commencing their clinical attachments. Our aim was to give undergraduates an opportunity to explore and learn further about Paediatrics. The secondary aim of early clinical paediatric exposure was for this to increase interest in paediatrics as a potential career choice.

Child Health Summer School
The Child Health Summer School is a pilot one week programme delivered in a tertiary paediatric hospital for second year medical students, designed to run between pre-clinical and clinical components of the medical degree. The summer school was delivered through educational sessions and experiential learning experiences including traditional small group tutorials, paediatric outpatient clinics, simulation sessions, neonatal examination and resuscitation and a patient engagement session. It concluded with a careers session followed by student presentations on their own personal learning experiences including traditional small group tutorials, paediatric outpatient clinics, simulation sessions, neonatal examination and resuscitation and a patient engagement session. The students quantitatively scored each session and completed pre and post course evaluations.

Results
Eight students attended the course. All of the sessions were positively rated with the simulation, patient engagement and career sessions most valued. Students self-reported knowledge of paediatrics increased from an average score of 1.5/5.0 pre course to 3.6/5.0 post course. Their interest in paediatrics as a career increased from an average score of 1.5/5.0 pre course to 3.6/5.0 post course. Participants reported a greater insight and understanding of a career in paediatrics.

Conclusions
The Child Health Summer school gives medical students the opportunity to experience paediatrics earlier in their medical course than traditionally occurs. Following the programme several students clearly articulated the desire to pursue a career in paediatrics and subsequently contacted us to seek further opportunities within child health. We postulate that continued engagement within paediatrics will enhance the likelihood of a career in paediatrics. The summer school increased both the medical students knowledge and interest in paediatrics as a career, although it is unclear if this will translate into paediatric specialty training applications. The programme will be repeated in 2017 with twenty four students enrolled and has responded to student’s feedback by increasing both inpatient and outpatient clinical exposure.

References:
1. RCPCH ST1 and ST2 Competition Ratios 2016
2. Health Education England 2015 ST1/CT1 Competition Ratios
4. Recruitment and retention in paediatrics: challenges, opportunities and practicalities

"Students need support during their early encounters with children and families as this can be daunting and may deter interested students from pursuing a career in child health" 

Recruitment and retention in paediatrics: challenges, opportunities and practicalities
Archives of Disease in Childhood 2016

"Brought back my desire for patient care"

"I have discovered the opportunities that paediatrics can offer you"

"I gained so much insight, I really hope to pursue paediatrics in the future and have a better idea of how to approach it"

"Hearing patient stories, really helped to reinforce the very human element of this specialty and identify qualities that can help with difficult interactions for the child"

“understanding of patients perspectives of illness and the impact on their life”

Students need support during their early encounters with children and families as this can be daunting and may deter interested students from pursuing a career in child health"