

The clinical oncology UK workforce census 2017

These key findings highlight the growing workforce crisis in clinical oncology



1 in 3

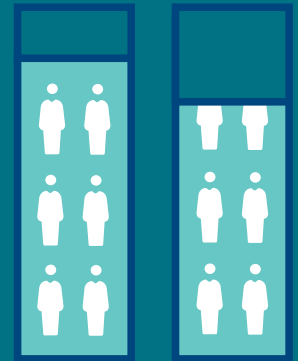
consultant clinical oncology vacancies have remained unfilled for a year or more

15%

shortfall in consultant clinical oncologists is forecast to reach

22%

by 2022



2017

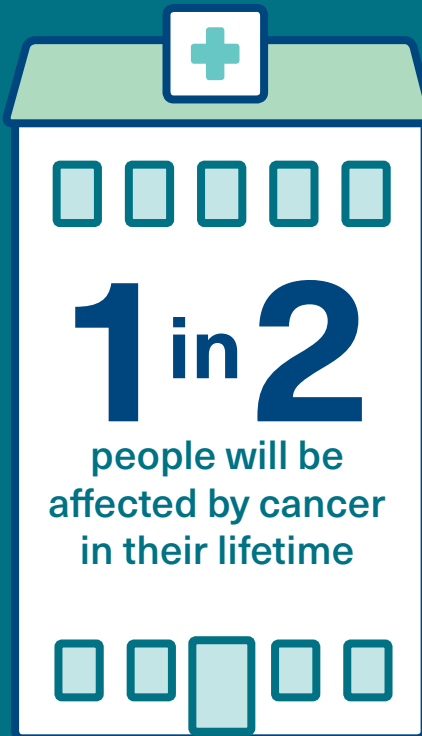
2022



1 in 6

consultant clinical oncologists

have fewer than the minimum 1.5 supporting professional activities (SPAs) required to support revalidation



1 in 2

people will be affected by cancer in their lifetime

23%

of clinical oncology consultants are international medical graduates



77%

of clinical oncology consultants are UK graduates



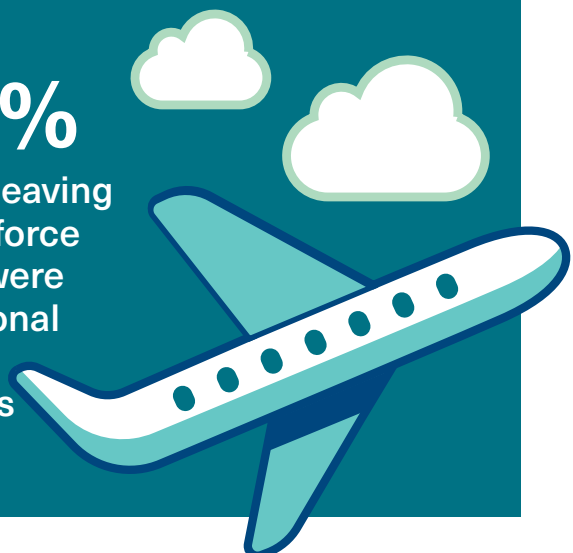
UK training only provides

69%

of the required number of consultant clinical oncologists per year

50%

of those leaving the workforce in 2017 were international medical graduates





New figures from The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) continue to highlight the ongoing struggle to staff UK cancer centres

The need for cancer services is increasing. One in two people will be affected by cancer in their lifetime.¹ Many more people are living with cancer as an ongoing chronic disease and as treatments become more targeted and advanced they require increased planning and supervision. Around 1,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed each day in the UK. There is already a gap between supply and demand and this is forecast to worsen unless changes are made now.

The current clinical oncology consultant workforce is at capacity with many working in excess of 48 hours per week; excessive working is likely to lead to stress and burn out and should be avoided. If consultant contracts were capped at ten programmed activities per week*, 80 additional whole-time-equivalent consultant clinical oncologists would be needed to meet current demand.

In addition to working long hours, the proportion of time allocated to SPAs (time spent on continuing professional development, quality improvement, audit and teaching) is being eroded. One in six oncologists having fewer than the recommended number of SPAs each week; reduced SPA time means less time to enhance techniques and services for patient benefit.²

There are too few consultant clinical oncologists working in the UK. Cancer centres are struggling to recruit the oncologists that they need. The number of vacancies remaining unfilled for a year or more increasing from one in ten in 2016 to one in three in 2017.

The number of reported unfilled posts is likely to be an underestimate as in some instances further attempts at recruitment are abandoned.

There are insufficient trainees to fill this gap. The number of new consultants expected to join the workforce each year for the next five years is fewer than the current number of vacant posts in the UK. Training numbers need to be increased to begin bridging the gap between the need for cancer services and the workforce available to provide it. Now, more than ever, investment in training clinical oncologists is needed to provide the systemic therapy and radiotherapy treatments that patients need.

International medical graduates (IMGs) make up a relatively small proportion of the UK clinical oncology workforce compared to other specialties but are proportionally over-represented in those leaving the workforce. Following the EU referendum, the NHS is finding it increasingly difficult to attract the clinical staff it needs from the EU.

The proportion of European doctors gaining a licence in the UK has fallen from 25% of the total in 2014 to just 16% in 2017.³

The clinical oncology workforce is in crisis. The RCR is calling on the Government to invest urgently to increase consultant clinical oncologist numbers in the UK. If the situation is allowed to continue to deteriorate, it will become impossible to provide the cancer services that patients expect and deserve.

References

1. www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/2015-02-04-1-in-2-people-in-the-uk-will-get-cancer (last accessed 21/6/18)
 2. Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. *Advice on SPA's in consultant job planning*. London: Academy of Medical Royal colleges, 2010.
 3. <http://ourglobalfuture.com/reports/our-international-health-service/> (last accessed 22/6/18)
- * Ten programmed activities equates to a 40-hour working week in England, Ireland and Scotland and a 37.5 hour working week in Wales.