



Royal College of  
Obstetricians &  
Gynaecologists

# Medical Training Initiative (MTI)

Booklet for new starters





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## MTI Booklet for New Starters

Author: Aleksandra Dubanowicz, RCOG Global Health Unit

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
27 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, London, NW1 4RG

visit [www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk)  
tel +44 (0) 207 772 6200  
email [mti@rcog.org.uk](mailto:mti@rcog.org.uk)  
twitter [@RCObsGyn](https://twitter.com/RCObsGyn)

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## Welcome to the UK

**Welcome.** Many congratulations – you have made it. You have successfully obtained your post in a UK hospital and you are starting your new job in a country far away from home. It will be an exciting and valuable experience for you, but you should be aware that it will be different from what you have been used to before. You will be faced with unfamiliar social and cultural practices and a foreign health care system. Don't worry if it all seems difficult at the beginning. This booklet has been created to help you understand the main differences you may observe, prepare you for likely situations and answer some of your questions. The core of this booklet is based on the real experience of MTI doctors and it highlights the aspects you should be aware of in order to get the best out of your MTI placement in the UK.

We hope that your stay in the UK will be as enriching and enjoyable as possible.

# Introduction

The UK has a long tradition of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) being employed by the National Health Service (NHS). Hospitals are well-prepared and familiar with accommodating non-UK graduates in medical posts.

All doctors who come to the UK for work must be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) and must comply with the standards of good practice. The GMC has a lot of practical and useful information for international trainees and years of experience with registering doctors from outside the UK. It is worth taking some time to go through their website: [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org)

Although the NHS regularly employs international doctors there is still a chance you may encounter difficulties in adjusting to the new culture and work environment. The study of Slowther et al.<sup>1</sup> has shown that there are some issues that non-UK doctors have struggled with while working in UK hospitals. These include:

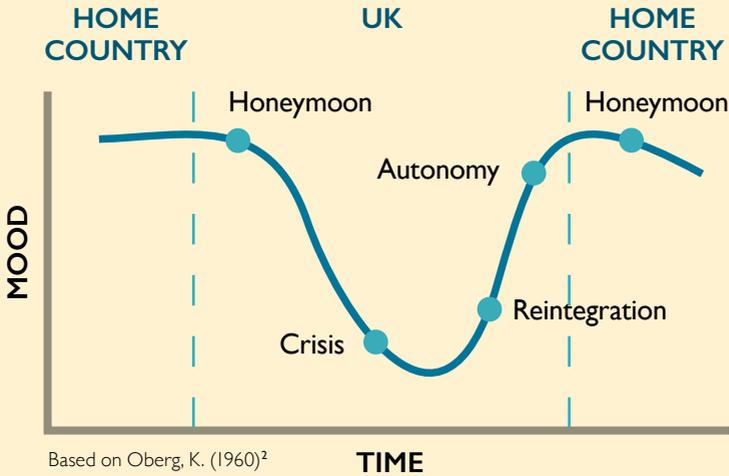
- **Lack of relevant information about the National Health Service (NHS)** – especially professional and ethical standards
- **Limited knowledge of regulatory frameworks in a new country**
- **Different perception of autonomy and shared decision-making between a doctor and a patient** – many of the trainees come from countries with a more paternalistic doctor – patient relationship
- **Unfamiliarity with a multidisciplinary team work approach** – which may disrupt the relationships with other professional colleagues – midwives, nurses, assistants
- **Various levels of support and training**
- **Communication skills** – this is indicated as a particularly challenging issue as there are many factors influencing effective communication – straightforward language barriers, differences in approach, shortage of vocabulary, differences in using body language or picking up nonverbal clues or facial expressions. These differences can sometimes lead to patients to interpret a lack of empathy or emotional support from a doctor.

<sup>1</sup>Slowther A et al. Non UK qualified doctors and Good Medical Practice: The experience of working within a different professional framework. In: The University of Warwick Report for the General Medical Council; 2009.

- **Differences in the cultural perspective or the nature of family life for example marital disputes, child discipline** - leading to differences in the way doctors handle confidentiality, disclosure, truth-telling or consent issues
- **Ethical difficulties and religious influences** – these can be reflected in attitudes towards end-of-life decision-making, neonatal care, and abortion, for example.

These are just examples that are proven to be some of the most common differences that non-UK doctors observe when working in the NHS. Later in this booklet, there is a list of specific issues and problems that O&G MTI doctors have faced during their stay in the UK followed by advice on how to deal with them. First however, please read about culture shock – the set of experiences that most people who travel or move abroad go through.





# Culture Shock

Relocating to work in another country is an exciting experience. It is also very challenging because adjusting to a new environment and a different culture is not always an easy task.

It is natural for most people to experience to some extent the symptoms of 'culture shock'. Culture shock is defined as a feeling of personal, psychological disorientation when living in a culture that is markedly different from your own (Oberg, 1960) . It applies to most of those

who move – regardless of gender, age, social status or profession. It is worth understanding that it is also completely natural. The figure above shows subsequent stages of adapting to a new environment and explains what might be your experience in the following months.

<sup>2</sup>Oberg K. Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environment. Practical Anthropology 1960;7:177-182.

## 1. Honeymoon stage

The beginning is always exciting. You have just arrived and you feel happy and ready to take up new challenges. You see and feel the differences and you are stimulated and full of positive energy. You acknowledge the new culture but you still feel very close to everything which is familiar back home.

## 2. Crisis/distress stage

You slowly become settled and things are no longer new and exciting. This is when culture shock can kick in. You might start feeling confused, frustrated, lonely and sad. Perhaps you miss your family, familiar food, your friends, your language and everything that makes you feel comfortable. You may suffer from symptoms like excessive sleep, compulsive eating, overwhelming stress, stereotyping, idealising your own culture or even feeling angry or hostile towards the culture you now live in and people you spend your time with. There is a possibility that you might become easily irritated, over-concerned about your health, bored and detached from social life. You don't really enjoy the way people act, the meals you order, the working schedule you are given. You may find it hard to accept these differences and feel as though the only right thing to do is pack your luggage and go back home. You feel like giving up, you question your abilities and it is all just a bit too much. But that is absolutely normal. And it will pass. It is in fact a good sign and common reaction - you are adjusting.

## 3. Recovery/reintegration stage

You finally start to rise above the negativity and see the bigger picture. Things are less frustrating and there are moments when you start feeling yourself again. You accept the differences and realise the only way to move forward is to live with them. You will notice how you become more confident, you make friends with people easily and feel much happier. You are better at coping with problems and you no longer feel isolated. You appreciate the situation that you are in.

## 4. Adaptation and autonomy

You feel like yourself again. There is a new, exciting but realistic perspective of what is around you. You feel you are capable of achieving your goals, you make decisions according to your preferences and you feel secure. You acknowledge both similarities and differences and you appreciate them. You begin to feel at home.

It is individual and subjective how long it will take you to adjust or to what extent you will experience something along the lines of culture shock. Some people barely notice the process while for others it is a very real and overwhelming experience. It is important to accept that culture shock is a natural reaction to the unknown and that it will not last forever. It will also be easier to deal with if you try to take a positive outlook and seek support if you feel you need it. Remember to try to focus on your new opportunities here in the UK rather than negative feelings.

# The MTI Experience

This is a list of what you can expect and how to manage when a problem occurs. Please use this guide as friendly advice given by your colleagues who volunteered to help make your new MTI life easier and more enjoyable.

## Before you arrive

- Sometimes there are delays in the process of application. These delays occur mostly because there are many institutions involved in making it work here in the UK and back home when you gather your necessary documents. In some places your application may get stuck for some time. The GMC, RCOG, hospitals and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges are very busy and process lots of applications – although they are all trying to ensure you are in the UK on time, it may be that at some stage your application will be delayed. It happens. When it does, remember– if you are eligible - you will eventually be able to arrive here.
- It is useful to read about the city and the hospital you will be working at.
- Do some research on British culture, weather (it can be rainy and cold a lot of the time!), and familiarise yourself with formalities.
- Make sure you bring enough money – your first salary may be delayed until you open a bank account.
- Do not bring anything not permitted by customs.
- Prepare all the relevant documents and don't forget to bring them with you. (CoS, job offer letter, certificates, evidence of experience etc.)
- These are websites worth visiting:  
[www.moneysupermarket.com](http://www.moneysupermarket.com) for mobile phones, broadband, bank account and utilities information;  
[www.rightmove.co.uk](http://www.rightmove.co.uk) or other accommodation websites – to check for rented accommodation near the hospital.
- If the hospital has accommodation close by – use it to avoid the urgent need for a car (for which you need to have an international driving license). It is a good option for the first few months.
- If you plan to bring your family sometimes it is better if they come few months after you. This will give you the time to settle in.

## Arriving and settling into the UK

- Try to attend the MTI Induction Event at the RCOG - it is usually held over two days in September.
- Ensure you have everything prepared to open your British bank account, including details of your National Insurance number and other formalities – you will be advised what to do by your hospital.
- Get used to English words and phrases (loo, tea time, cheers, tube etc.) and remember these vary greatly depending where you are based.
- Be aware of driving on the left, if this is not the case in your country – be careful. If you are a driver and you come from a country where you drive on the right, you may need a few lessons.

## Working environment

### i. Initial phase at the hospital

- You may start with shadowing a senior colleague.
- Once you start your job everything will seem different – you may experience some frustration, confusion and feelings of being lost - this is normal. It **WILL** get much better over time when you adjust to the new system.
- Give yourself time. You may start as an ST2 (sometimes also called SHO-Senior house officer). An ST2 is a junior doctor supervised by registrars and consultants. It may be frustrating for you, especially if you are experienced. You may be asked to put in cannulas, go to A&E and write discharge summaries etc. Look at it as a great opportunity to use this time to become familiar with the hospital, get to know your colleagues and hospital staff and observe what others are doing and how the system works.
- Try to remember who is who in the hospital, what their names are, and their functions or titles.
- Acclimatising may take you a few months and you may experience culture shock, homesickness or even feeling that you want to quit and leave. Try to take everything in and adapt to your new environment. You have been given a chance and it is you who defines what you get out of it. It will all fall into place after the initial phase.
- You may be coming to the UK with a very specific goal in mind but be flexible about it. Focusing too much on the vision you had in your mind back home may hinder you from other opportunities.
- Opportunities are everywhere – look for them and you will feel better about yourself and your accomplishments. Get everything you can out of these two years.

- There may be things you find interesting, exciting, beneficial or valuable and you will only realise it once being in the hospital.
- Some of the MTI doctors may perhaps feel as though they are in a busy unit and their individual needs are not necessarily the number one priority. In order to combat this, put yourself forward, take the initiative and remember that you have already achieved a great deal to get a placement on this scheme.
- The hospital can feel like a competitive environment. Be proactive and make yourself visible.
- Do not be afraid of people judging you and constantly watching your moves – do what you think is right but check anything you are unsure of.
- Remember you are not alone with your doubts or problems – many trainees go through the same feelings.

## ii. Communication

- You may find communication challenging at the beginning.
- Remember that your professional colleagues, consultants and midwives are there to help and assist you. Learn from them and observe.
- Consult your educational supervisor regularly– they will be able to answer your questions most of the time.
- Do not be afraid to ask, share your opinion or seek advice from someone more experienced.
- Build a good relationship with midwives from the very beginning. They will be helpful if you show them trust and respect.
- Be proactive at work – discuss, propose solutions and offer help to others.
- Exchange knowledge and experience.
- When talking to the patient speak slowly and very clearly.
- The patient – doctor relationship in the UK is based on a mutual agreement and a shared decision. The last word will always be the patient's. Be aware of all the alternatives you can give the patient – they have a right to choose whatever suits them best. Respect their opinion even if it is different to yours.
- Patients will mostly expect you to be familiar with their condition and medical history. Take a time to look at the notes before you see them.
- Take consent and confidentiality extremely seriously. Do not keep any details of patients unprotected. In case of doubt – research and read about data protection or ask someone more experienced.
- Communication is a key skill to success. Focus on it and work to improve it.

### iii. Important formalities

- Plan your holidays and book your leave early – if someone else books the dates before you, you may not be able to leave when you want to.
- Do not swap with others without checking your availability. You may not be able to swap it back should you need to.
- Your salary and banding depends on the respective hospital – some take into account previous international experience and some do not – unfortunately the RCOG cannot influence this decision.
- Book courses for the MRCOG Examinations and book study leave for the Exam far in advance.
- You will be working within a rota system. Ask the rota coordinator for help and instructions if you do not understand how it works.
- Use The Obstetrician & Gynaecologist (TOG) to prepare for your MRCOG Exam [www.rcog.org.uk/tog](http://www.rcog.org.uk/tog)
- Read the NICE and RCOG Guidelines. [www.rcog.org.uk/guidelines](http://www.rcog.org.uk/guidelines)
- Be familiar with Green-top Guidelines, hospital regulations and current articles in journals such as BJOG and the BMJ. [www.rcog.org.uk/bjog](http://www.rcog.org.uk/bjog)

- Involve yourself in audits and presentations.
- Book courses at the RCOG in the areas of your interests.
- Register with e-portfolio and keep it updated. Ask for help from your colleagues to maintain your e-portfolio – for more information contact [eportfolio@rcog.org.uk](mailto:eportfolio@rcog.org.uk)
- Check your emails frequently and respond to them.
- Follow the dress code: do not wear items or clothes that are not permitted.
- Always look neat and clean.

### Life outside the hospital

- If you feel depressed or that something is not going well - look after yourself.
- If you are feeling stressed, lonely or frustrated comfort yourself the way you would back home. Talking to others, befriending staff at the hospital or your neighbours may help.
- Keep yourself busy and make the most of being in the UK. You may consider sightseeing, driving around the country, signing up for the gym or a sports club or going to the cinema and favourite restaurant – it is up to you.
- Be informed. Visit websites that contain interesting information about your city, read about how to get about, study maps, and discover more about where you are living.

- Engage in some hobbies, find study mates and try not to isolate yourself.
- Go out and be social. It is very important to keep a good work–social life balance.
- If your family is not with you it may be difficult, especially at the beginning. Remember to keep in touch with them and take positive energy from it.

### Most difficult moments

- Mistakes will happen to you because they happen to everyone. You may feel awful if you receive criticism or a written complaint. It is obviously not pleasant but do not take it personally. It is your action, not yourself as a person that has been criticised.
- Be kind, apologise but learn from mistakes you make. It will make you a better doctor.
- If you feel as though there are issues you cannot deal with on your own – talk to someone or seek support.

### Help and support

You can obtain support from many different places. Start with friends or family. If you struggle with job-related problems the staff at the hospital may be helpful. You can contact your educational supervisor, the trainees' representative in the hospital or your mentor.

The RCOG organises annual assessment interviews with the MTI Officer during which you are free to share your concerns and seek help if you feel like it is needed. You are also invited to contact MTI anytime you face a difficulty that you think our office could help you resolve. There are new guidelines on our website which outline step-by-step what you and your hospital should do when an issue arises.

There are many useful contacts and websites you can visit too, in order to deepen your knowledge or find organisations that may be able to help.

*These are:*

RCOG – MTI Office  
[mti@rcog.org.uk](mailto:mti@rcog.org.uk)

GMC  
[www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org)

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges  
[www.aomrc.org.uk](http://www.aomrc.org.uk)

British Medical Association  
[internationalinfo@bma.org.uk](mailto:internationalinfo@bma.org.uk)

*Specific organisations that offer support for doctors from specific regions:*

Association of Pakistani Physicians and Surgeons  
[www.appsuk.org](http://www.appsuk.org)

British Arab Medical Association  
[www.bama.org.uk](http://www.bama.org.uk)

BAPIO – British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin  
[www.bapio.co.uk](http://www.bapio.co.uk)

BIDA –British International Doctors Association of the UK  
[www.bidaonline.co.uk](http://www.bidaonline.co.uk)

Medical Association of Nigerian Specialists and General Practitioners in the British Isles  
[www.mansag.org](http://www.mansag.org)

Sri Lankan Liaison Group Trainee Committee  
[mtiquerlessl@hotmail.com](mailto:mtiquerlessl@hotmail.com)

RCOG Liaison Groups  
RCOG Liaison Groups website

Nepalese Doctors Association  
[www.ndauk.org.uk](http://www.ndauk.org.uk)

*Remember, you are here to benefit from the experience as much as you can. Your placement in the UK is your chance to improve your knowledge, skills and communication. If you make the most of your experience, you may become more compassionate, skilled, knowledgeable and a BETTER doctor.*

*We wish you an excellent two-year stay here in the UK.*

The RCOG MTI Team



Royal College of  
Obstetricians &  
Gynaecologists



**Royal College of Obstetricians  
and Gynaecologists**

27 Sussex Place, Regent's Park  
London NW1 4RG

**Email** [mti@rcog.org.uk](mailto:mti@rcog.org.uk)

**Web** [rcog.org.uk/medical-training-initiative](http://rcog.org.uk/medical-training-initiative)