WHAT ABOUT A CAREER IN DERMATOLOGY?

What is Dermatology?
Dermatology is the study and treatment of hair, skin and nail disorders in children and adults. Skin disease affects 50% of the population at any one time, and constitutes the commonest reason for patients to present to their GP. It is a diverse and exciting career choice with the opportunity to sub-specialise in medical, surgical, paediatric, allergic, oncological, pathological, genital or psychiatric aspects among many others. Dermatology lends itself to high-quality teaching, training and academic research.

Looking beyond the skin
Skin diseases are multifaceted with over 2000 conditions described. Dermatology offers:
• Diagnostic challenge
• Opportunities to make clinical diagnoses
• Satisfaction of confirming clinical diagnoses with investigations
• Utilisation of general medical skills in addressing underlying pathology, and treating conditions with potentially toxic medicines
• Mix of see/treat/discharge and long-term follow-up
• Challenges relating to associated physical, social and psychological burden of disease.

Skin cancer and skin surgery
Skin cancer incidence is increasing, and constitutes a large part of the workload.
• All dermatologists train in skin surgery
• Many routinely perform flaps and grafts
• Some undertake a fellowship to train in Mohs’ micrographic surgery
• Skin surgeons work closely with other specialties including ENT, plastics and maxillofacial surgery.

Academic dermatology
There are many opportunities to get involved in research.
• Rare presentations of disease worthy of publication are frequently seen.
• Dermatology lends itself perfectly to laboratory and clinical research.
• High quality multi-centre clinical trials are coordinated by the UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network.
• Translational research (e.g. UK TREND) is yielding exciting developments in the treatment of inflammatory skin disease and skin cancer.
• Time out of training to undertake a higher research degree is actively encouraged.

Entry to dermatology
Entry to dermatology specialist training begins after core medical or paediatric training. Securing a training post in dermatology is competitive – optimise your chances:
• Demonstrate interest in the specialty, by gaining clinical exposure, attending meetings and courses, completing audits or research projects, and publishing papers.
• Attending the annual DermSchool event organised by the British Association of Dermatologists may be a good starting point.

Dermatology setting
Dermatology is predominately outpatient-based. A typical week might comprise:
• A range of clinics
• Surgical list
• Multidisciplinary meetings
• Education sessions
• Time for research, audit and admin
• On call covering in-patient and GP referrals