

## Study Leave Survey

### A SURVEY OF CHANGES IN THE STUDY LEAVE ALLOWANCES FOR ORTHODONTIC TRAINEES IN THE UK

#### INTRODUCTION

Study leave agreements outline the terms and conditions of the study leave allowances available to trainees in Deanery approved posts.

Typically the study leave agreement will specify the amount of money available per annum to reimburse expenses incurred by trainees whilst attending educational courses and meetings (study leave budget). The study leave agreement will also include the number of days per annum allocated to training (study leave allowance) and may specify who is responsible for approving the application is appropriate for the trainee's educational needs (eg the Training Programme Director).

The local Postgraduate Deanery provides the funds available for study leave and the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education Departments administer the study leave budgets for trainees within individual Trusts.

The provision of individual study leave budgets to trainees is highly variable, as shown by specialty specific surveys covering the whole of the United Kingdom and regional and national surveys.<sup>1,2</sup>

Recently, trainees in Deanery approved posts have been informed that changes in their study leave agreements have been introduced.

#### AIMS

- To investigate the changes implemented to the study leave agreements of postgraduate orthodontic trainees.
  - To assess the possible impact the changes may have on the training opportunities available to orthodontic trainees.

#### MATERIALS & METHODS

An email questionnaire was circulated to the members of the Training Grades Group of the British Orthodontic Society.

#### RESULTS

76 Trainees participated in the survey.

##### Initial Study Leave Agreement.

56% of the trainees had their study leave entitlements outlined within the terms of agreement of their employment contract.

The majority of trainees were allocated approximately 30 days of study leave per year and 35% of Trainees were informed of restrictions on the type of courses which they could attend i.e. approval would be granted subject to the endorsement of the Training Programme Director or Lead Clinician.

##### Changes to Study Leave Agreement.

65 % of Trainees have recently had their study leave entitlements reduced.

The average reduction for the respondents was 54% of their agreed budget.

Fifty percent of Trainees have had their study leave budget entirely withdrawn.

The reductions to the study leave budgets are represented in figure 1.

The majority of trainees have had restrictions imposed on their study leave by Lead Clinicians and Training Programme Directors. These include restrictions on which type of courses and/or conferences are deemed necessary during the training. An example of which is the limitation on attending of the British Orthodontic Conference unless the postgraduate is at a particular stage of their training or is presenting a research project.

The increased restrictions on the approval of study leave applications means that certain courses trainees have previously attended as part of their training are no longer being considered suitable for funding.

##### Notification of Changes to Study Leave Agreement

Only 72% of the trainees who have had restrictions imposed on their study leave agreement were formally notified of the changes, and 33% of the trainees were told the restrictions were permanent.

##### Trainees with Access to other sources of Funding

Only 7% of current trainees have access to an alternative source of funding (eg Departmental funds) for study leave purposes.

##### The Implications of the Imposed Restrictions

38% of trainees reported they are now unable to attend the local courses they would previously have wanted to attend.

51% of trainees reported they are now unable to attend the national meetings/training courses they would have wanted to attend as part of their training

programme.

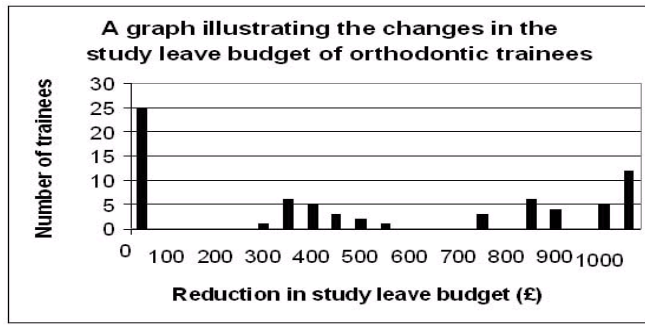


Figure 1. The changes (in pounds) of Study Leave Budgets of Orthodontic Trainees.

## DISCUSSION

There have been restrictions to the study leave allowances imposed on the majority (65%) of the current orthodontic trainees and the affected trainees feel that these restrictions will limit the training opportunities available to them.

The restrictions will prevent trainees from attending educational courses, both locally and nationally, that they would previously have been able to attend.

These restrictions could therefore have adverse effects on the training of orthodontic postgraduates in the UK.

## CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

Trainees with reduced study leave entitlements can contact the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education Department and/or the Postgraduate Deanery to register concern and inquire if the changes will be reviewed.

- Investigate the possibility of alternative sources of funding for Trainees study leave. Hospital Departments making profits from the organisation of educational courses could provide some funding to their current trainees and funds for educational electives can be applied for from the British Orthodontic Society, The Royal Colleges and Alumni Societies.

*The Training Grades Group are very grateful to the Conference and Meetings Committee of the British Orthodontic Society who in response to the findings of this survey are trying to ensure the registration fees for all orthodontic trainees attending BOS events are as low as possible.*

## References

- Devlin MF, McCaul JA, Curries WJR. Trainee perceptions of maxillofacial training in the UK. *Br J Oral Maxillofac Surg*, 2002 Oct;40(5):424-8.
- McCaul J, Maguire P, Davies I. Study leave funding in the devolved nations, *BMJ Career Focus* 2002;325:S20