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## Longitudinal Impact of Welsh Clinical Leadership Fellowship

Journal:	<i>Leadership in Health Services</i>
Manuscript ID	LHS-06-2019-0033.R1
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Clinical Leadership, Evaluation, Health leadership competencies

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Manuscripts

# Title: Longitudinal Impact of Welsh Clinical Leadership Fellowship

## Abstract

**Purpose:** To evaluate the longer-term impact of the 12-month Welsh Clinical Leadership Fellowship.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Semi-structured interviews with ten out of 14 trainee doctors who were fellows between 2013-2016, exploring how leadership knowledge and skills were used in clinical practice, impact on patient care, and influence on careers. Data, ~~were~~ gathered in 2017, when participants had completed the Fellowship between one-three years ago, ~~were analysed thematically~~.

**Findings:** All found the Fellowship rewarding. The experience was felt to advantage them in consultant interviews. They gained insight into the wider influences on organisations and the complexity of issues facing senior clinicians. Although subtle, impact was significant, equipping fellows with negotiation skills, enabling them to better influence change. Indirect impact on clinical practice was evidenced by enhanced confidence, teamworking skills and progression of improvement projects. However, use of skills was limited by lack of seniority within teams, demands of medical training and examinations. The negativity of others towards management and leadership was also noted by some.

**Research limitations/implications:** Small participant numbers limit generalisability.

**Practical implications:** The Fellowship is designed to equip participants with skills to lead improvements in healthcare delivery. Those more advanced in their medical training had greater opportunity and seniority to lead change and were better placed to apply the learning. This has implications to whom the training should be targeted.

**Originality/value:** A rare study exploring the longer-term impact of a leadership programme on later clinical practice which adds to the body of knowledge of impact and efficacy of leadership training programmes in healthcare environments.

**Keywords** Clinical Leadership, Evaluation, Wales

**Paper type** Research paper

Leadership in Health Services

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## Background and Purpose

The importance of medical leadership and management in the complex organisation that is the National Health Service (NHS) has been advocated in the literature (Griffiths, 1983; Darzi, 2008; Francis, 2013). The General Medical Council guidelines outline the wider management and leadership responsibilities of doctors within the workplace (GMC, 2012). Exercising these responsibilities depends on seniority of role within an organisation, notwithstanding the primary duty of all doctors which is “the care and safety of patients” (GMC, 2012). Over the last decade or so, a variety of training programmes have been set up in the UK to overcome the low level of engagement, as noted by Bohmer (2012), of doctors in leadership and management (Darzi, 2008). These include the National Medical Director’s Clinical Fellow Scheme; Yorkshire and Humber Improvement Academy Clinical Leadership Training Programme; Scottish Clinical Leadership Fellowship; Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Leadership Fellows’ programme; as well as the Welsh Clinical Leadership Training Fellowship. Although eligibility criteria and the content of programmes differ, in essence their aim is to provide trainee doctors with the skills and theoretical knowledge to undertake leadership and management roles in their future careers.

Set up in 2013, the Welsh Clinical Leadership Training Fellowship (WCLT) is a 12-month programme representing a collaboration between Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) (formerly the Wales Deanery), Academi Wales, Welsh Government and NHS Wales. The aim of the Fellowship is to provide doctors and dentists with opportunities to enhance skills, knowledge and understanding of healthcare management, leadership and policy and to develop clinical managers capable of building and leading improvements in healthcare delivery in the NHS.

The WCLT is open to trainee doctors and dentists undertaking core or higher specialty training. As part of the programme, fellows undertake a leadership project, under supervision, within their host organisation, which is typically health boards. Projects are identified by the host organisations and focus on improving services for patients. They are designed to enable fellows to apply to practice the principles of leadership and management which they explore within the training modules. Fellows are encouraged to engage with other host-based opportunities, including attending meetings and working with multi-professional teams.

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4 During the year, fellows attend a structured leadership training programme run by Academi  
5 Wales, which provides opportunities to network with and learn from senior medical  
6 colleagues across Welsh health organisations. Although the majority of their week is spent  
7 on the service improvement project, fellows are allowed to continue with clinical duties for up  
8 to a maximum of 20% of their time.  
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12 The literature identifies many different models of leadership and leadership training, most of  
13 which comprise similar core competencies. The CanMEDS (Canadian Medical Education  
14 Directions for Specialists) Framework (Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of  
15 Canada, 2005; Viches *et al*, 2016) outlines seven roles which are fulfilled by medical  
16 experts. One of the roles is 'leader' which entails responsibility for the ongoing operation and  
17 improvement of the healthcare system; contribution to administration, teaching and  
18 scholarship; efficient use of resources; and improving practice at personal, team,  
19 organisation and system levels. This framework has been widely adopted. For example, both  
20 the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) medical leadership and  
21 management curriculum and the Danish Health and Medicines Authority (2014) are  
22 organised around the CanMEDS framework.  
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35 In the UK, the NHS Leadership Qualities Framework (LQF) (2003) model comprises fifteen  
36 qualities, arranged in three clusters: personal qualities; setting direction; and delivering the  
37 service. This model is a general framework aimed at all staff in the health service. Similarly  
38 in the UK, the Medical Leadership Competency Framework (MLCF) model (2010), as  
39 designed by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement and The Academy of Medical  
40 Royal Colleges, is specifically aimed at doctors and has five domains: demonstrating  
41 personal qualities; working with others; managing services; improving services; setting  
42 direction  
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49 The Academi Wales leadership programme was informed by the MLCF (2010) (Table 1) and  
50 designed to develop or enhance leadership skills, competencies and behaviours for medical  
51 leaders of the future.  
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54 Table 1: How the Academi Wales Leadership Programme relates to the Medical Leadership Competency  
55 Framework  
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Academi Wales Medical Leadership Programme	Medical Leadership Competency Framework (MLCF)
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Self-awareness	Personal qualities
Effective management and leadership of people and resources	Working with others Managing services
Delivery of service innovation	Improving services
Strategies for improved effectiveness	Setting direction

The competencies of the WCLF programme, achieved through service improvement projects and the academic programme, are designed to: support and achieve organisational objectives through effective management and leadership of people and resources; positively impact on patients through support and delivery of service innovation; increase self-awareness and understanding of personal impact on situations and provide strategies for improved effectiveness. The projects are a key part of the programme, and as noted by Ten Cate et al (2010), competence means not only knowledge and skills but also their application. The projects provide opportunity to further develop and apply leadership skills.

We have reported our earlier evaluation of the programme, drawing on data collected during the course of the programme (Phillips and Bullock, 2018). Effective evaluation needs to be part of the overall development strategy (Phillips and Phillips, 2001) and only a small proportion of evaluation programmes have assessed long-term impact (Kellogg Foundation, 2002). The aim of this study, therefore, was to evaluate the longer-term impact of the WCLF on the work of former Fellows: how, and in what ways, do fellows use the knowledge and skills acquired during the Fellowship year within their clinical practice; what impact, if any, did the programme have on fellows' clinical practice and patient care; and what was the influence of the Fellowship on careers?

## Method

We adopted a qualitative, interview-based longitudinal approach focused on the first three cohorts of the WCLF programme. A total of 14 fellows undertook the programme from its inception in August 2013 to those who completed the Fellowship year in July 2016.

An initial email was sent to all fourteen prospective participants, and follow-up emails sent to non-responders, inviting them to take part in a semi-structured interview by telephone or face-to-face according to their preference. Ethical approval for the study was granted (28

February 2017) by the research ethics committee of Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education at Cardiff University. For the purpose of the study, all fellows' names were anonymised. We include reference to the year in which participants undertook the WCLF programme such that C1 is cohort 1 (2013-14), C2 cohort 2 (2014-15) and C3 cohort 3 (2015-16).

Interviews were recorded, transcribed and anonymised. We adopted a thematic approach to the analysis of the data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1993). We followed the well-used six-step approach to thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This began with a process of data familiarisation through checking transcription accuracy and reading and re-reading the transcripts. One author (SP) coded the data manually (using highlighters and margin notes). The assignment of codes to themes was finalised through and a process of independent mapping whereby each author grouped the codes and discussed and agreed the outcomes. The grouping of the codes into themes broadly identifying common themes aligned to our three objectives: (1) use of the leadership knowledge and skills acquired during the Fellowship year within current clinical practice (key codes included transferable learning from the project, application of knowledge about leadership and change management, use of insights about personalities and teamworking, and value of wider insights into organisational systems – governance, finance, resources, priorities); (2) (indirect) impact on clinical practice and patient care (key codes included personal development - greater confidence, leadership, resilience, and quality improvement work); and (3) influence on career developments (key codes included preparation for applications and interviews, career planning, and opinions on what is the best career point to undertake the fellowship). We grouped a further set of codes (including time to use skills, demands of training, lack of seniority, limited leadership opportunities, and colleagues' negativity) under the theme The analysis also revealed barriers to impact.

## Results

Ten (out of 14) former fellows agreed to take part in the study: nine interviews were conducted by telephone and one face-to-face. Table 2 shows the distribution of study participants by cohort. We note that there were more non-participants from cohort 1 than from the other two cohorts.

Table 2: Participants



Cohort	Number of Fellows in Cohort	Number of Fellows in study	Response rate
Cohort 1 (2013-14)	4	2	50%
Cohort 2 (2014-15)	4	3	75%
Cohort 3 (2015-16)	6	5	83%
Total Fellows	14	10	71%

On completion of the Fellowship, all fellows continued training, re-entering at points ranging from CT2/ST2 (Core Training year 2/Specialty Training year 2) to ST7 (Specialty Training year 7). Some fellows were near completion of specialty training when their Fellowship year ended, and at the time of interview, two had been appointed as consultants. Of the four non-participants, it was not possible to establish the stage of training they had reached or where they were currently based.

#### Use of leadership knowledge and skills within current clinical practice

All projects focussed on improving services for patients and were designed to enable fellows to apply the principles of leadership and management to practice. The projects were diverse. In cohort 1, for example, one project focused on the integration of emergency services in one town, across primary, community and secondary care. The fellow worked with a project board to develop the plan and provided clinical leadership for project implementation and the evaluation of quality improvement within the health service. In an example from cohort 2, one project concerned the integration of health and social care of older people with complex needs. This required the fellow to liaise with general practitioners (GPs), the health board and third sector organisations to use data from various sources to identify those at greater risk. One project from cohort 3 involved the fellow in the development of a new service which engaged the fellow in developing patient pathways and resolving problems, supported by clinical directors of theatres and critical care.

Daya (C3) stated his main learning experience had come from the project:

*Not so much the content of what we were doing, but how to actually get the project going and how to sustain it. (Daya, C3)*

Fellows did not necessarily select projects within their own specialty; six fellows chose projects outside of their training specialty. For example, a General Practice trainee undertook a surgical services project; the project for a trainee in plastic surgery was

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3 concerned with care services for the elderly. Gwen (C1), who undertook a project within her  
4 specialty, noted that all skills learned during the Fellowship year were, in her opinion,  
5 “*completely transferable*”.  
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9 The Fellowship provided an insight into the influence of government and politics and the  
10 implications of financial constraints and pressures on the NHS, and opportunities to shadow  
11 Medical and Clinical directors as well as the Welsh Health Minister augmented this  
12 knowledge. It also afforded fellows a greater understanding of where their individual  
13 specialties sat within the wider scope of the NHS. It equipped them with an awareness of  
14 wider and more complex issues faced by senior clinicians, leading one fellow (Emlyn, C2) to  
15 appreciate that it was “*unrealistic*” to think problems could be solved merely by getting more  
16 people and money, rather the importance of focussing on “*how we can change what we do*”.  
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23 Fellows thought that the experience of the projects and these wider insights had influenced  
24 their current practice, although the impact was subtle rather than obvious. Morgan (C2), for  
25 example, commented that the knowledge of management and leadership had given him a  
26 greater appreciation of “*behind-the-scenes systems*” and that this knowledge was “*useful*”.  
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29 He stated that he had learned:  
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33 *...how the leadership structure in hospitals work, how that looks organisationally and*  
34 *how it functions and useful to know who those people are and what they do if I want*  
35 *to effect any change. (Morgan ,C2)*  
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3 Fellowship, Bryn (C1) had developed a better understanding of how people think and act  
4 and how to negotiate with people within a team:  
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7 *We did a lot of work on personality traits and type of teamwork. I understand now*  
8 *why they think and act the way they do. So that's been extremely useful from a*  
9 *clinical [team] point of view. (Bryn, C1)*  
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12 He noted that having such an understanding of people “*definitely*” impacted on his own  
13 behaviour, in engaging with people, who in the past, he would not have got on with “*because*  
14 *I just got frustrated with them*”.

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Daya (C3) reported spending time with team members on a “*one-to-one*” basis, to get everyone on side to achieve goals; and the knowledge of personality types and team dynamics had improved Amadi’s (C3) confidence in leading a team and his ability to get more out of team members. Some of the techniques learned had become embedded into practice as revealed by the following comments:

*I think I'm actually subconsciously using some of the techniques, and I'm not even aware that I'm doing it. (Amadi, C3)*

*It's in my head now. You can't take that out. (Daya, C3)*

Although the Fellowship had not changed her day-to-day interaction with patients, Gwen (C1) acknowledged that it had modified the way she interacted with hospital staff. She tended to be a little less tolerant of excuses and was:

*... a bit more willing to question people these days than I would have been before I did it [the Fellowship]. Get people to look for solutions rather than necessarily just complaining about problems. (Gwen, C1)*

Vivian (C3) reflected that the Fellowship had armed her with new skills and new ways to deal with problems and how to “*interact with difficult colleagues*”. She reported making better use of team members by delegating tasks that she did not like to those who did. She made specific reference to how teamworking skills had become embedded:

*...you do learn without realising and it's often only later that you realise how much you learnt.... The Fellowship has shaped who I am now, given me more awareness of who I am, my role within a team ... All I've learned is now embedded, it's just always there and that's who I am now post-Fellowship. (Vivian, C3)*

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4 Lindsay (C3) felt the Fellowship had given her the *“the ability to look at the world through*  
5 *new eyes”*. There were both positive and negative aspects to this new view of the world. As  
6  
7 someone who had always been keen to make changes and get involved, positive aspects  
8  
9 gave her *“the knowledge and bravery to actually get involved”*. On the negative side,  
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11 however, she was cognisant that although keen and enthusiastic, she could not make all the  
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13 changes she would like to or tell people what she thought they were doing badly. Her  
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15 strategy was, therefore, *“to be positive and negotiate with people”*.

16  
17 Skills learnt in terms of how to negotiate and write proposals, enhanced fellows' ability to put  
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19 forward business cases for new patient services in the future and four fellows reported that  
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21 their continued contact with HEIW had led to: writing papers for publication; participating in  
22  
23 and leading sessions on leadership; organising training days. At interview, Vivian (C3)  
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25 reported that she had become a member of the Quality Improvement Skills Training (QIST)  
26  
27 steering group at HEIW.

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29 The fellows reported varied continued involvement with projects. Four fellows had had no  
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31 further involvement in the projects. Although Parker (C3) would have liked to continue  
32  
33 working on some aspects of the project, there just was not sufficient time:

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35 *It's time pressure...It's not that the will isn't there. There is just a physical limit to how*  
36  
37 *much stuff you can get out of a week. (Parker, C3)*

38  
39 Morgan (C2) had left Wales and therefore had no further contact with his project. However,  
40  
41 he reported that he had been able to transfer the skills learned during the Fellowship on  
42  
43 workforce planning to his new Trust. Emlyn (C2) had moved health boards, so had no  
44  
45 further involvement with the project, but he too reported transferring some of the ideas and  
46  
47 skills learned.

#### 48 Impact on clinical practice and patient care

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50 Although fellows found it hard to identify the *direct* impact on their practice and patient care,  
51  
52 some of them reported use of the knowledge and skills of leadership and teamworking as  
53  
54 described above, had *indirect* impact. Part of this indirect impact was revealed in how the  
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56 doctors talked about their personal development. Emlyn (C2), Amadi (C3), Gwen (C1) and  
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58 Francis (C2) stated that the Fellowship had taught them a lot about themselves. Since  
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60 undertaking the Fellowship, Emlyn (C2) reported that he felt *“more confident”* in his role as a

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3 consultant; Amadi (C3) noted the WCLF had given him an understanding of team dynamics  
4 and he now felt “*more confident in leading a team*”. Gwen (C1) commented:  
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8 *I think it's made me a bit more resilient and also given me a few more coping*  
9 *strategies when things don't actually work the way I wanted them to. (Gwen, C1)*  
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11 Our suggestion here is that such insights and strategies equipped the doctors with skills and  
12 attitudes that enabled them to perform better in their clinical practice, to the benefit of patient  
13 care. A little more directly, Daya (C3) commented that prior to the Fellowship he had not  
14 taken a very “*methodical approach*” in recognising areas that he could improve. It therefore  
15 helped him to identify:  
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21 *the important aspects of the day-to-day role of the team I work in that should be*  
22 *focused on improving care. (Daya, C3)*  
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24 On their return to clinical training, both Bryn (C1) and Francis (C2) had opportunities to take  
25 part in and supervise quality improvement projects. Emlyn (C2) reported having taken on the  
26 lead for a quality improvement project that involved:  
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31 *setting up and running a quality improvement group within our paediatric department*  
32 *multidisciplinary group. (Emlyn, C2)*  
33

### 34 Influence on career development

35 Fellows considered that the Fellowship as a whole, and the knowledge of management and  
36 leadership in particular, was beneficial for them when applying for further training and  
37 consultant posts. Gwen (C1) felt the Fellowship provided an understanding of what it would  
38 be like to be a consultant within the NHS before actually becoming one. She remarked it had  
39 exposed her to the struggles of being able to get something done and to change some  
40 things.  
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46 Both Emlyn (C2) and Gwen (C1) thought that the knowledge of leadership and management  
47 gained during their Fellowship had prepared them for consultant interviews and the  
48 questions about management. As Emlyn (C2) stated:  
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53 *A lot of the questions are all about, management and leadership and understanding*  
54 *the NHS and the work with the Health Boards. So I think it gave me a huge*  
55 *understanding of that. (Emlyn, C2)*  
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4 He further declared that the knowledge enabled him to answer questions at interview, which  
5 some of his colleagues had found challenging, and he was able to use his Fellowship  
6 experience to exemplify his answers. Gwen (C1) added that the skills she had developed  
7 during the Fellowship had made her *“very sellable in terms of actually what I can give as a*  
8 *consultant”*. In a similar fashion, Morgan (C2) noted that the Fellowship provided something  
9 extra to offer at consultant level interviews. Observing and shadowing senior management  
10 provided an insight into the challenges they face, and what being a Clinical or Medical  
11 Director actually involved on a day-to-day basis. For Amadi (C3) observing the work of his  
12 Clinical Director had proved *“valuable in terms of my own career planning and future career”*.  
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14 Although at different stages of training and seniority, nine of the former Fellows personally  
15 felt they had undertaken the Fellowship at the *“right point”* in their careers.  
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19 Although Parker (C3) and Lindsay (C3) were juniors and undertook the Fellowship before  
20 going into specialty training programmes, neither felt this had been a disadvantage. Lindsay  
21 (C3) was not of the opinion leadership training should be restricted to later in a career  
22 pathway. Lindsay (C3) stated that in her clinical role:  
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*People look to me for leadership. There’s a lot of opportunities. And the idea that I’m  
not senior enough to learn about leadership is a bit of nonsense really. (Lindsay, C3)*

Amadi (C3) stated he could have done the Fellowship at any other point in his training, but  
having done one year of the specialty training programme felt:

*It was the right time to have that year away from the clinical setting. Kind of reset the  
clock. Learn some new skills and then use those when I go back to clinical. (Amadi,  
C3)*

Morgan (C2) felt the fellowship afforded *“a little bit of breathing space”* from the  
standardisation of clinical training, and provide time to reflect on his future career pathway.  
However, Emlyn’s (C2) comment also recognises that leadership development is not just  
about innate qualities: it requires hard work too:

*... it really depends on how you work as a person. It’s not an easy year...It’s hard  
work, and it’s not just a year off. (Emlyn, C2)*



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4 Former Fellows' responses suggest that the best time for a trainee to undertake the  
5 Fellowship comes down to a personal sense of when the time is right. As Parker (C3)  
6 succinctly put it:  
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9 *The number [year of training] is not an indictment of competence. (Parker, C3)*  
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## 12 13 Barriers to impact

14 In this section we consider barriers to impact as raised by the fellows we interviewed. Time  
15 to use skills was a significant factor. On returning to clinical practice, fellows' time in their  
16 respective training programmes varied, thus it is difficult to generalise about the  
17 opportunities to apply the skills acquired during the fellowship year.  
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20 Although there were differences in opinion as to the best stage of training for undertaking the  
21 Fellowship, seven former Fellows acknowledged that the personality of the individual trainee  
22 was an important factor. Having said that, there was some evidence to suggest that the  
23 career stage of the Fellow could impede the use of the leadership skills. Although most  
24 (nine fellows), judged that it had been the right time in their career path to undertake the  
25 Fellowship, there were examples where their more junior positions lessened the scope for  
26 them to use their leadership skills. Morgan (C2), for example, felt that on reflection, *"I don't  
27 think it was the perfect time for me"*. He felt his lack of experience had held him back  
28 somewhat, and perhaps he should have waited until further into training and had built up  
29 credibility: *"I was so very junior, between FT1 and FT2"*. Gwen (C1) further commented that  
30 at Foundation level, others' expectations may limit the impact of the Fellows:  
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33 *You're too junior to almost have an opinion which is nonsense, but that unfortunately  
34 is the way that people will look at you from the outside. (Gwen, C1)*  
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37 Although Daya (C3) accepted that there could be benefits of doing the Fellowship at an early  
38 stage in training, being a long way off a consultant role provided little *"time dedicated to work  
39 on improvements and management type activity"*. Personally, therefore, he felt it should be  
40 undertaken when *"you're established on your clinical training path"*. (Daya, C3). Bryn (C1)  
41 commented *"if you don't use your skills, they get lost very quickly"* and noted that only  
42 consultants were able to undertake certain functions. Post-Fellowship, therefore, fellows  
43 were limited in the leadership roles they were able to undertake. Both Parker (C3) and Daya  
44 (C3) concurred that leadership is not considered part of clinical training programmes.  
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3 One of the major hurdles to making improvements and implementing change, were the  
4 challenges and resistance of medical colleagues and Emlyn (C2) understood why people  
5 “get exhausted” trying. Gwen (C1) admitted that there were still some people whom she  
6 would hesitate to tell she had done the Fellowship, because the attitude would be “oh you  
7 want to be a manager”. She felt that they looked down at her for having an interest in  
8 management or leadership and felt the need to make excuses for having done the  
9 programme. Bryn (C1) concurred that the attitude of going over to the ‘dark side’ (Hayden,  
10 2017; Loh *et al*, 2016) still prevailed among some senior staff in spite of an increase in  
11 medical leadership posts and involvement in quality improvement. However, he felt that the  
12 creation of more medical leadership programmes and posts in the UK had improved the  
13 attitude of seniors somewhat.

## 23 Discussion

24 This is a small-scale study and not all of the former fellows agreed to take part. We are thus  
25 wary of extending the conclusions beyond the confines of this sample. It is difficult to  
26 generalise the impact of the Fellowship as all the cases were unique. There was variation in  
27 terms of what stage they were at when they did the Fellowship, the time since completion of  
28 the programme, and how their careers had progressed. That said, our findings serve to  
29 highlight the value of the Fellowship programme and provide specific examples of how  
30 former fellows’ current practice benefits from the skills they developed. Certainly for those  
31 former fellows who had proceeded to consultant level, a knowledge of leadership within the  
32 NHS had proved immensely useful at interview. It had made the interview process more  
33 straightforward and helped them to secure consultant posts.

34 Some individuals naturally possess the personal qualities and characteristics necessary for  
35 leadership (Northouse, 2018), but as well as such ‘innate’ qualities, fellows recognised that  
36 the fellowship year required hard work. In general, the more junior fellows did not feel at a  
37 disadvantage at undertaking the fellowship at such an early stage of their careers and  
38 success was, in part, dependent on the fellows themselves. However, opportunities to apply  
39 the skills learned during the fellowship year varied. The Fellowship is designed to equip  
40 participants with skills to lead improvements in healthcare delivery. Those more advanced in  
41 their medical training had greater opportunity and seniority to lead change and were better  
42 placed to apply the learning. This has implications for whom the training should be targeted.

43 It is notable that the Scottish Clinical Leadership Fellowship ([www.scotlanddeanery.nhs.scot](http://www.scotlanddeanery.nhs.scot))

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3 restricts entry to trainees at CT2/ST2 (Core Training 2/Specialty Training 2) or above, and  
4 the Northern Ireland Clinical Leadership Fellowship programme ([www.nimdtg.gov.uk/adept/](http://www.nimdtg.gov.uk/adept/))  
5 which restricts entry to ST4, or ST3 for GP and Dental trainees.  
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9 A constraint on using their leadership skills was the reported perception of the culture in the  
10 NHS. Both hierarchy, whereby only consultants can undertake certain leadership activities,  
11 and a dismissive attitude to those showing an interest in leadership, limited trainees'  
12 involvement in leadership activities and their contribution to the implementation of change  
13 and improvements for the benefit of patients.  
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17 Although direct impact on clinical practice and patient care was difficult to identify, indirect  
18 impact was evident through personal development, in gaining confidence in leading teams  
19 and a greater awareness of their role within a larger organisation. Such insights and  
20 strategies enhanced performance in clinical practice, which could benefit patient care. One  
21 of the more useful aspects of the fellowship was gaining an understanding of teamworking.  
22 Learning about teamworking was of particular value when they returned to clinical practice,  
23 enhancing how former fellows interacted with their teams. Not only did the Fellowship  
24 provide techniques to interact with difficult colleagues and negotiate solutions, it also  
25 impacted on fellows' own behaviour towards colleagues within the clinical setting. Their  
26 confidence within the team setting improved, and delegation skills were also enhanced.  
27 Such knowledge had become embedded into practice and used subconsciously.  
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## 41 Conclusion

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43 This study has revealed some of the longer-term impacts of the clinical leadership fellowship  
44 in Wales. A knowledge of how management and leadership functions within the NHS  
45 provided a greater understanding of the complex issues faced by senior clinicians. Through  
46 teamworking and continuing projects focussed on improving patient care fellows were able  
47 to identify the indirect impact of the Fellowship on patient care. Notwithstanding the transient  
48 nature of teams within the health service where establishing relationships could be  
49 somewhat challenging, a greater understanding of team dynamics had increased fellows'  
50 confidence in both managing and leading teams. However, on returning to clinical practice,  
51 fellows were at different levels within their specialty training, so it was not always feasible to  
52 transfer and use the leadership skills learned. Concentrating on completing clinical training  
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was a priority for the fellows at the end of the WCLF. This limited the time, opportunity or capacity to participate in on-going leadership activities.

Arising from our findings we suggest that further consideration might be given to whether applicants for the fellowship should have attained a minimum stage in their career, whether the fellowship programme should include a structured assessment of competencies and whether there is a need to further support trainees on return to the workplace with continued leadership opportunities. We have noted the difficulty of demonstrating impact on patient care. Although challenging, further research might include measures of patient outcomes and cost of care, for example. Perhaps more realistically, we also suggest that insight into the impact on patient care might be gained from analysing feedback from stakeholders in the leadership project the fellows undertake.

~~This longitudinal study of the WCLT adds to the body of knowledge of the impact and efficacy of leadership training programmes.~~

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