



The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

RCPATH – Immunology response to HEE's Strategic Framework Call for Evidence 2021

The main issues facing the immunology workforce are:

- The previously recommended immunology workforce numbers of 1 consultant per 500k population are not currently met (RCP, 2015). There are 70 FTE immunology consultants in the UK (RCP data), and predicted requirement in 2015 was for approx 130 consultants.
- There is increased demand for immunology services, the largest growth areas being in immune deficiency (due to increasing number of treatments available) and allergy. The pandemic has also increased workload for the specialty, particularly in the areas of vaccination, allergies, and covid immunity.
- RCPATH data shows that a large number of the workforce is close to retirement or post-retirement age. 18 out of 80 consultants are over 60. Trainee numbers are insufficient to replace these posts and expand the service.
- Less than full time (LTFT) working is increasing - resulting in the need to train more people to achieve the same number of FTE staff.
- There are many small centres, where long-term absence of a colleague or retirement can adversely affect service provision - resilience is low.
- There are about 5-10 vacant consultant positions in the UK that are not possible to fill. This is sizeable when considering the overall consultant numbers.

Demographics and Disease

Increasing availability and use of immunotherapeutics and cancer treatments, likely to result in more people with immune deficiency. This would increase the numbers of patients with long-term immune deficiency (particularly secondary immune deficiency), requiring greater workforce numbers to manage.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- *Strong demand increasing impact*

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Low Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- *0 - 5 years*
- *6 - 10 years*

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Increasing prevalence of allergy, and development of more therapeutics for allergic disease. This would increase the number of patients with allergic disease, both requiring assessment as well as long-term care, as more treatments become available.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- *Strong demand increasing impact*

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Low Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- *0 - 5 years*
- *6 - 10 years*

Significant number of workforce are older/post-retirement (College data - 9 are >65 and 9 are 60-64 out of a total of 80 consultants). Multiple consultant vacancies will arise within the next few years - there are currently 5-10 unfilled posts in the UK, and current trainees finishing are unlikely to meet this gap.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- *Strong demand increasing impact*

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Low Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- *0 - 5 years*
- *6 - 10 years*

Additional factor/s: Current number of immunology consultants are insufficient to meet existing demand. Previous recommendations were for 1 FTE consultant per 500,000 population. Current FTW consultant numbers are approx 70 - which is very much below the estimated 130 required for the UK population.

[Consultant physicians working with patients - revised 5th edition | RCP London](#)

Public, people, patient and carer

Increased public awareness of immunology and allergy - this has been increased by the pandemic, with increased workload relating to covid, vaccination, allergies, and immunity. This will increase the number of referrals for specialist opinion and advice.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- *Moderate demand increasing impact*

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Low Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- *0 - 5 years*

Staff and student

Increased frequency of LTFT working and training. This will require more people to be trained to achieve an equivalent number of FTE workforce.

[Census data toolkits | RCP London](#)

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- *Moderate demand increasing impact*

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Medium Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- *6 - 10 years*
- *11 - 15 years*
- *Beyond 15 years*

Training delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will prolong the time trainees need to complete training, potentially resulting in delayed entry into the consultant workforce.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- *Weak demand increasing impact*

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Low Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

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- 0 - 5 years

Science, digital, data and tech

Increasing use of genomics in management of patients. New skills will be required to integrate genomics into clinical care.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- Neutral

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- Low Impact

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- Low Impact

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- Low Impact

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- 6 - 10 years

Increased use of digital health technologies have been particularly accelerated by the pandemic. Workforce will need to learn and adapt to new ways of working.

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- Neutral

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

- Low Impact

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- Low Impact

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- Medium Impact

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- 0 - 5 years

Service models and pandemic

Integration of pathology services. If further integration of pathology services occurs, this will result in the need for new ways of working, but also potentially more immunologists having to work across bigger geographies as more laboratory and clinical services are no longer in the same location.

[Consultant physicians working with patients - revised 5th edition | RCP London](#)

[Census data toolkits | RCP London](#)

c.5.1.c. Impact on workforce number demand:

- Weak demand increasing impact

d.5.1.d. Degree of impact on need for new skills:

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- *Low Impact*

e.5.1.e. Degree of impact on need for new roles:

- *Low Impact*

f.5.1.f. Degree of impact on need for new ways of working:

- *Medium Impact*

g.5.1.g. In what time horizon will the most significant impact be felt on workforce demand?

- *6 - 10 years*
- *11 - 15 years*

In 15 years' time, what one key thing do you hope to be able to say the social care and health system has achieved for people who need care and support, patients and the population served?

Expanded the workforce sufficiently to provide a good standard of care for patients and the population served.

In 15 years' time, what one key thing do you hope to be able to say the health and social care system has achieved for its workforce, including students and trainees?

Adequate staffing numbers and resilience so that the workforce is not overstretched and at risk of burnout.