Aspect of life	Better	Worse	Multinomial confidence interval for difference in proportions
Teaching opportunities	50 (6.6)	503 (66.4)	-0.64 to -0.55*
Research opportunities	137 (18.1)	295 (38.9)	-0.25 to -0.16*
Study time for examinations	339 (44.7)	173 (22.8)	0.16 to 0.27*
Fatigue while on call	472 (62.7)	96 (12.7)	0.44 to 0.54*
Social and family life	198 (26.1)	397 (52.4)	-0.32 to -0.30*
Overall quality of life	220 (29.0)	309 (40.8)	-0.16 to 0.05*

*P<0.05.

departments had implemented shifts compatible with the new deal, 32 indicated that these had been rejected, mostly because of resistance by trainees (28 replies). Four hundred and fifty six respondents gave reasons for the non-implementation or rejection of the shifts, the two main reasons being "not enough trainees" (214) and "change resisted by trainees" (166).

Overall, 473 respondents did not think that the introduction of shifts compatible with the new deal would improve their training in anaesthesia. The table shows members' opinions on what effect the shifts would have on various aspects of their lives. Only 121 preferred to continue with or convert to a shift compatible with the new deal, while 451 wanted to base average hours on intensity of the workload as defined by the new deal but to allow the maximum length of the shift to be decided locally by trainees.

Significantly, only six of the 25 trainees at Glasgow Royal Infirmary thought that fatigue on call had improved and three thought that study opportunities had increased while they were working shifts compatible with the new deal.

These surveys suggest that, in anaesthesia, the clear withdrawal of restrictions on the maximum length of a shift from the new deal's guidelines would favour the uptake of flexible shiftwork without exacerbating fatigue on call. Shortages of staff may continue to impede the reduction of contracted and actual hours to the level commensurate with the intensity of the workload (64 hours a week) but should not prevent trainee anaesthetists from being contracted for the appropriate class (2) of additional duty hours. A report on the survey of the group of anaesthetists in training has been sent to the bodies responsible for negotiating and implementing the new deal. There is no reason to assume that these findings are exclusive to anaesthesia.

PETER MACKENZIE
Honorary secretary

Group of Anaesthetists in Training Committee,
Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland,
London WC1B 3RA

1 NHS Management Executive. *Junior doctors. The new deal.* London: NHSME, 1991.

Anaesthetics training in the United States

EDITOR,—In response to the report of the chief medical officer's working group,¹ the Royal College of Anaesthetists published plans for a new structured training programme for the specialty.² It will take six years to train as an anaesthetist. I am caught up in both the old and the new systems. I spent two years as a senior house officer and three as a registrar. I am currently employed for 18 months in the United States, in a teaching and research post. On my return I will have to complete a further two years as a senior registrar (the new term will be specialist-registrar). My anaesthetics training will have lasted more than eight years.

This contrasts greatly with anaesthetics training in the United States, where the training programme lasts three years, but "residents" (trainees) may then opt to do a further six month "fellowship" in a specialty. Three years after start-

ing in the specialty they are considered to be fully trained and may begin practice as an "attending" (consultant). The discrepancy between our programmes means that most of the residents I am now supervising will be consultants before I am.

Training in the United States takes half the time that even the new structured training programme in the United Kingdom will take. The amount and quality of formal teaching are similar to those in the United Kingdom, but the supervision at work is vastly superior: trainees are supervised throughout their three year training. One attending is in charge of two residents for the day. Patients are seen preoperatively by both the resident and the attending. The attending rotates from one theatre to another, is always present at induction of anaesthesia, and is usually present at emergence from anaesthesia. Whenever necessary the resident will call the attending to assist (if he or she is not already present). This system provides a safe environment for trainees to practise their skills, as well as many opportunities for teaching and discussion. The level of supervision is the same throughout the nights and weekends and whether the case is an arthroscopy or open heart surgery. Confidence in the quality of the training is reflected in the fact that on completion of their residency it is not obligatory (although it is desirable) for residents to pass their "board" exams before they can practise independently.

This system results in confident and competent anaesthetists. This indicates that the quality of the learning experience rather than the length of the apprenticeship is the more important factor. British trainees know that the length of training has more to do with providing a service than with gaining new skills, and this fact has been openly acknowledged.³ If the quality of the teaching and supervision is to be improved the numbers of staff will have to be increased so that the same level of service can be provided. This cannot be a cost neutral process. Indeed, the length of training will ultimately be determined by the amount of money that the government makes available.

GEOFFREY N MORRIS
Assistant professor in anaesthesiology

University of Virginia,
Charlottesville,
USA

1 Department of Health. *Hospital doctors: training for the future. The report of the working group on specialist medical training.* London: DoH, 1993.

2 Royal College of Anaesthetists. *Specialist training in anaesthesia, supervision and assessment.* London: RCA, 1994.

3 Norman J. Learning to teach anaesthesia. *Royal College of Anaesthetists Newsletter* 1995 Mar:1.

Doctors are promoting expansion in non-consultant career grades

EDITOR,—With the implementation of the Calman report and the restriction of junior doctors' working hours to 52 a week (plus four hours of educational time), the existing pattern of hospital staffing in the United Kingdom is clearly unsustainable without a large increase in the number of hospital doctors. All agree that increasing the

number of junior doctors is out of the question (even though over 700 additional senior house officers have been appointed in the past year despite apparently tight controls). *Achieving A Balance* envisaged that with the reduction in the availability of junior doctors the work would be carried out by increased numbers of consultants together with a small number of non-consultants (staff grade doctors and associate specialists), who for personal reasons were unable to progress to consultant status.¹

I now perceive an alliance between trusts, many consultants already in post, and some junior doctors (who hope to become consultants of the old style) promoting an unfettered expansion in these non-consultant career grades to do the medical work in hospitals, mainly at unsocial hours, that until now has been done by junior doctors. Those in the profession who are supporting this move are allowing the government, through the trusts, to staff hospitals with cheap labour; they will force many specialist trainees to accept posts in these grades with lower remuneration than if the profession insisted that such work must be carried out by doctors whose remuneration was equivalent to that for the current consultant grade, with an appropriate and realistic premium for work at unsocial hours.

To date most of the doctors appointed to the associate specialist grade and the staff grade have been aware of their personal difficulties in attaining full specialist training. If, however, we were to move to a scenario in which large numbers of non-consultant doctors with poor pay and conditions had been frustrated in their realistic hopes of achieving at least the pay of the consultant grade, the United Kingdom might well be faced with large numbers of demoralised hospital doctors, some in middle age, who would be unlikely to be the most enthusiastic deliverers of efficient specialist care in our hospitals in the middle of the night, when illness can be at its most critical.

M J GOODMAN
Consultant physician

Bury General Hospital,
Bury,
Lancashire BL9 6PG

1 United Kingdom Health Departments. *Hospital medical staffing: achieving a balance. Plan for action.* London: HMSO, 1987.

The changing role of hospital consultants

EDITOR,—We agree with John Bailey that traditional working arrangements must be changed and that consultants should seize the initiative.¹ He suggests that a hierarchical management structure, as found in Sweden and other countries, should be adopted. In contrast, we believe that consultants should support the creation of management teams within a horizontal structure.² Each team can develop expertise in a particular specialty and should provide flexibility for each member's skills to be applied for the benefit of the patients. The team consists of an appropriate skill mix of at least one consultant, clinical nurse specialists, assistant physicians, trainees, and secretarial staff. Continuity of care is provided by the multidisciplinary approach within the team and by staff who are introduced to the patient at the initial consultation and whom the patient sees consistently.

Within an institution each team acts as both a consumer and a supplier of services through its interactions with other teams. We believe that line managers should be facilitators rather than have subordinates. They can help to coordinate teams to provide cross cover and to mediate the allocation of resources within budgetary constraints. Facilitators could be elected by teams from their own members on a rotational basis to allow closer