

STARSURG NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020/21

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STARSurg | BJS

Join our Steering Committee

Joining the STARSurg Steering Committee is a fantastic opportunity for medical students interested in research. Successful applicants will gain experience in leadership, organisational skills and teamwork that have proved invaluable in future job applications - in particular to academic foundation posts, as well as opportunities to deliver projects in the future.

As a result of the previous years COVID-19 pandemic, STARSurg took a slightly different role focusing on the development of educational content for students and junior doctors. This year, we are extremely pleased to announce we will be re-engaging with our traditional research activities including POSTVenTT (POST operative Variations in anaemia Treatment and Transfusions) in Autumn 2021 and the SCORPION (SCoping Outcomes foR acute Pancreatitis: a natIONwide study) study in 2022.

STARSurg welcomes applications from current medical students in the UK and Ireland to join its national steering committee. These will be triple marked and the shortlisted candidates will be telephone interviewed. Please note only candidates who are at a UK medical school and will NOT be entering their final year of study in Autumn 2021 will be considered.



Click **here** to find out more about role descriptions.

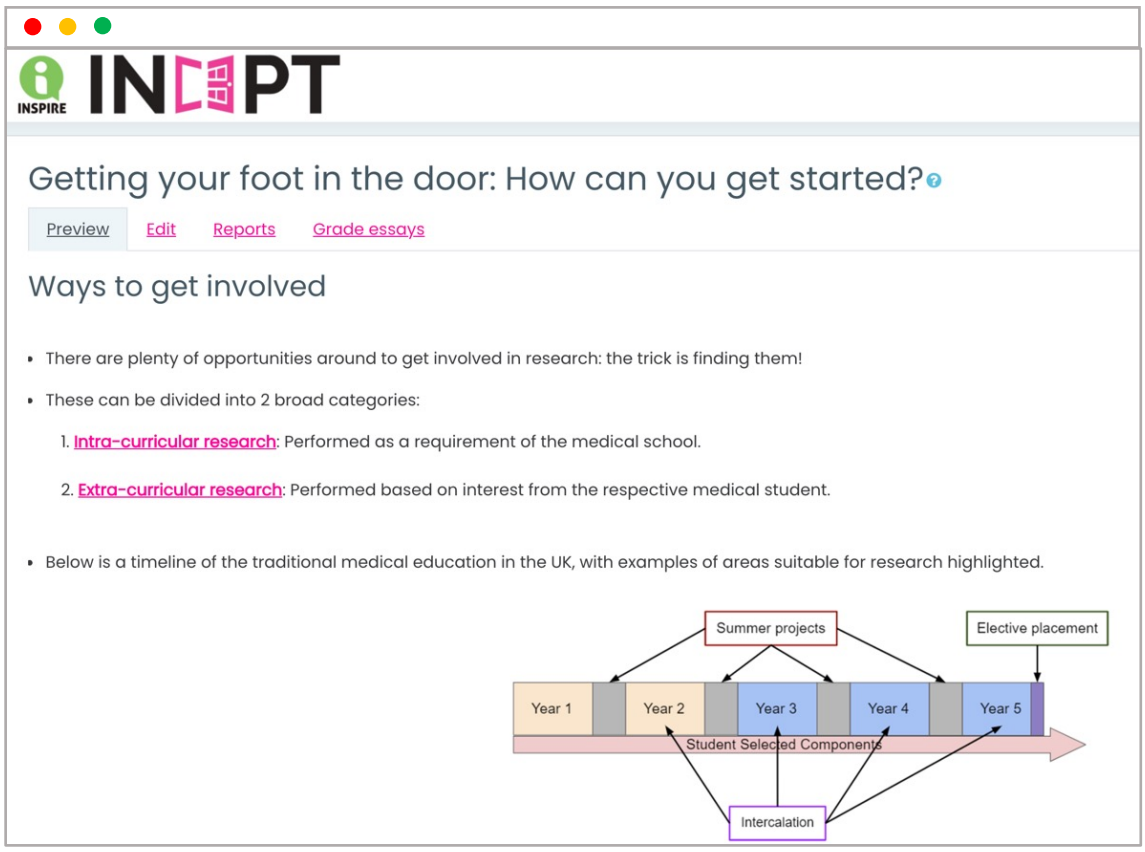
MODULE TEASER

INCEPT: Academic Careers Module Teaser

With the recent launch of our e-learning platform, INCEPT, we are excited to bring you a host of learning modules to take you to the next stage of your clinical academia journey. With summer fast approaching one of the modules we'd like to really highlight in this issue is our module on academic careers.

Our academic careers module is designed to delve deep into how to get involved in research as a student and additionally the who, what, where, and how of the UK Academic Foundation Programme (AFP). We understand that often it can seem there is "hidden curriculum" to getting involved in research, and onto the clinical-academic training pathway. Therefore, our aim in developing this module is to ensure that everyone has access to the same baseline information regarding getting involved in research, how to make the most of your work, and how you can pursue a clinical academic career!

Overall, this is an incredible resource for those struggling to find their footing in research, those considering intercalation or an AFP applications, and even seasoned research veterans who are looking to maximise their academic opportunities. This is definitely one module not to miss! Find out more **here**.



TOP TIPS TO RUNNING AN ONLINE EVENT!

By Aleksandra Mergo, Sulaymaan Al Majid, Alisha Jaffer & Shiraz Shafi

The COVID-19 resulted in a shift in the normal day-to-day life of the whole population. Medical students were affected by losing out on invaluable exposure to both surgery and research. To combat this STARSurg were committed to ensuring that students and junior doctors across the UK and Ireland continue to feel involved and engaged in these areas.

We decided to run a series of Academic Surgery Evenings delivered in each region to drive enthusiasm in surgical research while providing local opportunities for networking and collaboration among those sharing these interests. In this Top Tips series, we have compiled a list of useful tips and tricks from 3 STARSurg regional leads in order for you to be better suited in organising and running an educational online event of your own.

1. Make a detailed plan with deadlines

- Plan the planning process itself. Make sure to chunk the process into smaller steps and set deadlines for each step, e.g. find suitable speakers, contact them, design promotional materials, advertise the event. You can use a spreadsheet, a word document or a Notion page to keep track of which tasks have been completed and what still needs to be considered.
- Plan for the worst case scenario and make 'contingency plans', i.e. what if a speaker cancels at the last minute? What if the speaker cannot share their slides with the audience? Be prepared for doctors and surgeons forgetting to reply to your emails and having to chase after them -- as a medical student you will be busy a lot of the time and your speakers have even more on their plate.
- Keep your team/event coordinator in the loop. This will help to reassess what else you need to do and how you need to go about doing it. You can only make a plan once you know all the pieces on the board.
- Know your audience: Are there international students at your school? Are you only presenting to medical students, or will other allied health professions be invited? Do you need to consider various time zones? While it may not always be possible to cater to everyone, having a clear idea of who will be attending your online event will help with marketing and event turnout!

2. Write email drafts early

- The closer to the event you will be, the more stressful it will become. Having email drafts ready is a great way to take some stress from your shoulders.
- When you create a draft speaker invitation, make sure to include the date, time, location (if the event is online you might want to specify which platform you will be using), how long you want their talk to be and the content you would like them to discuss.
- Make a word document and have all your email drafts ready on that. Make a draft for each stage of your planning, e.g one for enquiring availability, one for confirming final date etc. If you have rigid requirements about the length of each talk it might be beneficial to include a list of questions they could answer in their talk. (Alex)
- Work smarter, not harder: take advantage of mail merge plugins for Outlook, Gmail or any e-mail client. You can plug in your e-mail copy and customize the format and even customize greetings without actually writing out every single e-mail by hand.
- At the beginning of the school year, at a club fair or recruitment event, get people to sign up to a "mailing list". This will make your event promotion SO easy! (While also respecting GDPR policies)

3. Learn from others

- It might seem counterintuitive but you can learn a lot about creating a successful event from attending similar events. When you add the focus lens on the organisation of an event, you can pick up a lot of great ideas from others.
- Ask friends who are in societies what advice/tips they have for throwing events or use your own society's event coordinator's perspective.
- In addition to friends, your seniors in medical school will have gone through the whole process and are probably the few people who can provide you with invaluable feedback. However, if you don't ask, you won't get help.

4. Allocate time to spend planning the event during the week

- It is very easy to get lost in planning the event week in and week out and you may find yourself getting constantly stressed in the build up to the event.
- It is important to keep in mind that you can't control everything and that things will seem to constantly keep changing in the build up to the event.
- Make sure to allocate time specifically for checking your inbox and responding to emails. Event planning can stretch out immensely if you take several days or weeks to respond to your potential speakers. You will appear more professional and respectful towards your speakers if you respond to their emails swiftly - you can facilitate this process by using email templates as discussed earlier.
- To avoid these burnouts, these plans will work only if you can start early. We often say it's never too late to start, in event planning however, let's just say it's never too early to start!

5. Be persistent

- This is a very underrated quality that a lot of healthcare professionals ironically appreciate
- With the busy lifestyles most healthcare professionals lead, they find it very useful to get friendly reminders and are also impressed with your resilience to keep pushing!
- Be polite! Language matters, and persistence is key but there is a fine line between aggressive and persistent!
    - Avoid wordy e-mails and always end every single e-mail with a clear call-to-action. Bold your call to action, important dates/deadlines and key information that can be missed on a quick glance. If you don't have a clear call-to-action, consider rewriting your email.
- Being considered a keen medical student can actually take you a long way in your learning experience at your local hospital trusts you are placed at. Building a positive relationship with a speaker can pay dividends in the long term, for example research opportunities.

6. If you feel you are out of your depth, get help

- This is an important point to note because as much as you will enjoy planning a whole event from scratch and learning what works and what doesn't, there will be times where you feel you aren't really sure what is happening.
- And that is okay, that's why you have a team to work with and supervisors to help you out, but the only way they can help is if you tell them you are struggling.
- There is no best event or the right way to go about doing something, but there is always room for improvement to make an event better.
- Reach out to your network, whether it be other STARSurg leads, other students on placement and students at other schools if you are struggling!

TOP TIPS TO RUNNING AN ONLINE EVENT!

7. Showtime!

- Schedule a tech-test with your speakers and other members who will help you run the online event. Nobody likes to sit around for the first 10 minutes of an online event listening to back-and-forth "Can you hear me now?". Remember that glitches can happen, but failing to prepare is preparing to fail. Sort out wi-fi connection issues early and ensure slides are playing seamlessly.
- Have your event promotion poster as the slide that is displayed for the first few minutes as attendees enter the online event - it shows them that they are on the right call, and also adds to the professionalism of the event.
- Introduce each speaker before they talk and summarize who they are when you are thanking them to keep a good event flow. For example, "Thank you so much Dr. X for that great talk -- for those of us just tuning in, that was Dr. X, consultant in general surgery at {hospital name} speaking on {subject matter}." This also signals to your next speaker that they are coming up.
- If a speaker is sharing slides, make sure you explain to them that they will be made the host of the meeting to do so. Make them the host as you are introducing them (or get someone else to handle that while you are introducing them!).

8. Feedback collection

- Feedback collection can be tricky - offer an incentive (e.g. attendance certificate, contact information of the speakers, slides) to ensure adequate survey completion.
- Use the feedback you have been given! Sometimes the feedback can be pretty plain as a means-to-an-end for some attendees to get the slides/attendance cert, but you can get helpful feedback to incorporate in future events you plan on running. Sometimes feedback forms can even offer future ideas to embark upon!



STARSURG PARTNERSHIPS

GUTS partnership

We are very excited to have partnered with GUTS UK! We will be working with them over the next couple of years, so we wanted to introduce them.

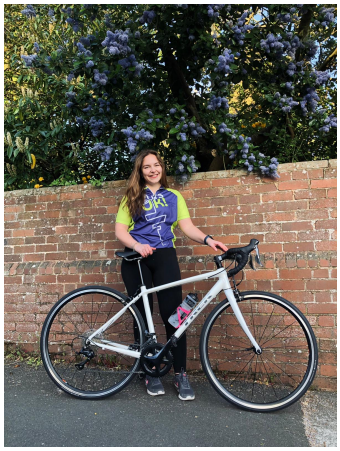
Originally the charitable arm of the British Society of Gastroenterology, Guts UK is the only UK charity funding research into the digestive system. Since their inception in 1971 they have been instrumental in supporting over 300 medical research projects. Not only do they fund invaluable research but they are also a key resource for patients newly diagnosed and living with a digestive condition or symptoms. They have produced accessible and evidenced based resources on a huge range of topics, enabling patients and their families to make informed decisions about their health.

Guts UK are also on a mission to raise public awareness about digestive conditions and symptoms. Lots of people are embarrassed to talk about it, which can lead to delays in diagnosis and treatment. Guts UK are helping to change this narrative and encouraging patients to get the help they need

We have partnered with this fantastic charity to continue to conduct valuable research into our guts. We will also be using our social media platforms to raise awareness of the charity so they can continue to help improve outcomes for patients. If you are keen to fundraise for them yourself, do check out their **website** for more information.







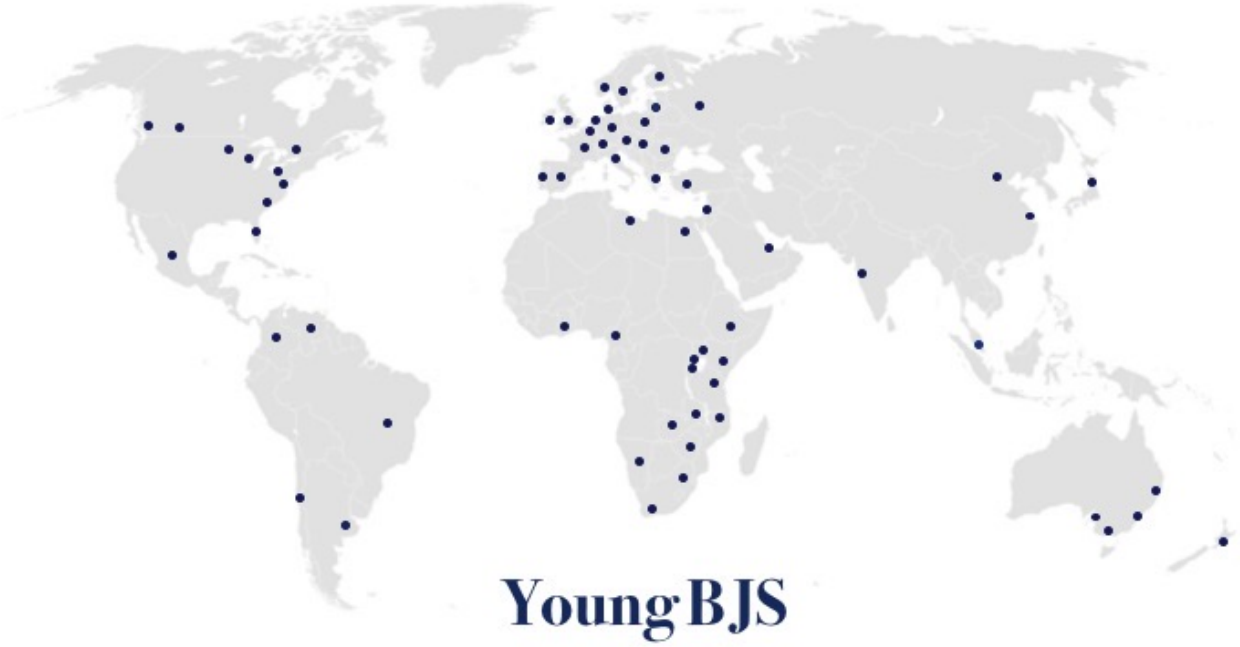

Young BJS

What is it?
Young BJS is a junior version of the British Journal of Surgery Society, and is run in collaboration with the society, and the BJS Open editorial team. It's basically for anyone with an interest in surgical research.

Who can join?
Young BJS is open to all grades, from medical students to junior consultants. Membership is FREE!

Why should you join?
Joining the society will be a great opportunity to show your commitment to academic surgery, and get hands-on editorial experience. This will give you a unique insight into the often confusing process of publication review, and probably give you some tips for how to improve your own research along the way. The group are also going to be supporting collaborative research projects, and developing a digital learning platform, so you could be instrumental in helping to shape the direction of these activities. It will also be a great opportunity to network with peers and those in more senior roles so it might even be the place to find yourself an informal mentor.

How do I join?
Enthusiasm is all that is required so if you have that in spades, send your name, institution (Uni or Trust), career stage and specialty interest (if you have one!) to admin@youngbjs.org. Check them out on **Twitter** for more info!





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