

PHEM training in the South West

Pre-Hospital Emergency Medicine (PHEM) is an exciting sub-specialty training programme, delivered in conjunction with Anaesthesia, Emergency Medicine, Acute Medicine or Intensive Care Medicine. The specialty offers trainees a broad range of challenges and training opportunities working in the out of hospital environment.

Health Education South West

Health Education South West (Severn) enjoys diverse geography, heritage and culture. PHEM trainees are based in North Bristol, with easy and quick links to the city centre and to the rest of the region & country. Training is delivered in partnership between Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT).

We currently have three trainees at various stages of training. One post is a full time 12 month scheme C post, with two on scheme A spending 50% of their time working in Emergency Medicine. One scheme A post is linked with Southmead Hospital, the regional Major Trauma Centre, and the other Bristol Royal Infirmary, a specialist cardiac centre.

South Western Ambulance Services

Our local ambulance service is one of the largest in the country and very well organised. The service was the first NHS ambulance service in the country to become a foundation trust in 2011, and covers the geographical area from the Isles of Scilly and Cornwall in the south west, up to Gloucester in the north.

PHEM trainees have the opportunity to train and work closely with all levels of clinical ambulance staff including specialist resources such as the Hazardous Area Response Teams, Operations Officers, and Emergency Care Practitioners.



Great Western Air Ambulance Charity

Great Western Air Ambulance is based at Filton Airfield in North Bristol. The critical care team is available from 7am until 1am and covers an area from Tewksbury to North Somerset and Swindon to Chepstow. The region has 2.4 million people, mainly within the urban centres of Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Swindon. GWAAC is one of the busiest air ambulance services, attending over 1600 patients in 2015.

The critical care team at GWAAC consists of critical care paramedics, consultants and PHEM trainees. The team is dispatched by a dedicated HEMS desk to high acuity incidents with features suggesting the need for critical care intervention. The team responds either by helicopter or by response car depending on geographical location, weather, and time of day. Approximately 25% of cases are cardiac arrest, 30% acute medical emergencies, 40% trauma, and 5% paediatrics.

There is a strong team ethos at GWAA. We have provided PHEM training since 2014. Our critical care paramedics are permanent members of staff who are highly trained with vast pre-hospital experience. PHEM trainees benefit from the input of this experienced and multi-disciplinary team, through mentorship and teaching.

PHEM training:



All trainees start with an induction to the air base and critical care team, followed by the 7 day residential IBTPHEM National Induction Course. This provides a grounding in the clinical, operational, and environmental aspects of pre-hospital care.

Following this week, trainees continue in phase 1a training with supervised time with both GWAAC and SWASFT clinicians. There is classroom and one-to-one teaching, simulation training, and 100% consultant supervised shifts. All trainees (during phase 1a) also spend time with crews on double-crewed ambulances, rapid response vehicles and spend time at Ambulance Control on general and specialist dispatch desks.



During phase 1b, trainees complete our sign-off process (supervised experience, scenario assessment, and relevant knowledge test). Following this, trainees will then be supervised both directly and indirectly whilst delivering pre-hospital critical care. There is a top cover rota of experienced consultants who provide indirect supervision and clinical advice for these 'solo' shifts. The overall direct supervision rate for 2014-16 trainees was 50%.

The service is busy and attends high acuity patients on a daily basis so offers great training. Previous PHEM trainees have performed over 40 pre-hospital emergency anaesthetics in their year, sedated more than 25 patients and delivered multiple critical care interventions, blood transfusions, attended major incidents and multi-casualty incidents.

In addition to clinical work, trainees attend monthly clinical governance meetings covering aspects of the PHEM curriculum and wider unit-specific training. Trainees are given time to attend the local Major Trauma Centre's monthly morbidity and mortality meetings, as well as easy access to study leave to attend relevant training of their own choosing.

There are strong links to specialist training opportunities across the region. Many members of the team are also part of organisations such as NETS (regional neonatal retrieval service), WATCH (regional paediatric retrieval service) and Mountain Rescue, affording easy opportunity to learn from these services.

The unit is active in pre-hospital service improvement and research, with multiple projects running at a time, unit members presenting and publishing nationally and internationally. Trainees are supported in undertaking projects during their training and often submit high quality work to appropriate meetings. This is a great environment to develop research ideas and complete pre-hospital projects.



PHEM trainees are given opportunities to be involved in event medicine, giving more learning opportunities and the chance to get involved with large sporting and cultural events.



Previous PHEM trainees are members of the PHEM Trainees' Association (PHEMTA) ensuring good understanding and representation of the needs of those joining the service.

We work closely with our charity team, supporting base visits, public events and occasional interviews, fostering close clinical, academic and social ties - making Severn a fantastically rewarding environment in which to train.

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