

Invited Editorial

Enhancing Musculoskeletal Radiology Experience in the United Kingdom: A Beginner's Guide for an Indian Radiologist

Siddharth Thaker¹, Rajesh Botchu², Harun Gupta³

¹Department of Radiology, Kettering General Hospital, Kettering, Northamptonshire, ²Department of Musculoskeletal Radiology, Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham, ³Department of Musculoskeletal Radiology, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Leeds, Yorkshire, UK.



***Corresponding author:**

Dr. Siddharth Thaker,
Consultant Radiologist,
Department of Radiology,
Kettering General Hospital,
Kettering, UK; Visiting
Consultant Radiologist,
University Hospitals of Leicester
NHS Trust, Leicester, UK.

siddharththaker@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS) can provide numerous possibilities for clinical skills and professional development in musculoskeletal radiology to Indian radiologists. These training opportunities are incredibly flexible, and one can tailor them according to one's needs. Such posts include short-term professional enhancement opportunities requiring no General Medical Council registration (GMC) or Fellowship of Royal College of Radiologists qualification. They include clinical observerships or attachments, commonwealth medical fellowships and Bracco Fellowships. In addition to former, long-term subspecialty training opportunities are also available, where GMC registration is an essential pre-requisite. Such posts include dedicated 1-year musculoskeletal radiology fellowships, global fellowships, and other NHS clinical service grades positions such as locum consultants, trust-grade, and staff and associate specialist grade positions. In this editorial, we shall provide a brief introduction about each of them to make Indian radiologists aware of their existence and, in turn, help to pursue one according to individual choice.

Keywords: Musculoskeletal radiology, Musculoskeletal radiology fellowships, Musculoskeletal radiology observerships, Clinical attachments, United Kingdom National Health Service

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, young radiologists entering into Indian healthcare workforce have become successful in breaking the stereotype of "settling down" immediately after completion of their postgraduation training. Young as well as mid-career radiologists, even with no objective of permanent overseas relocation, are looking forward to having enhanced subspecialty, musculoskeletal radiology, and experience. Meagre opportunities for such training back home forces Indian radiologists to search for similar possibilities abroad. The United Kingdom (UK) remains one of the top destinations for advanced professional development for healthcare workers worldwide. Clinical radiology UK workforce census report 2018 demonstrated that most common areas of practice in UK radiologists are musculoskeletal, breast, gastrointestinal, and vascular interventional radiology.^[1] It can translate into the easy availability of more supervising radiologists when one opts for professional enhancement attachments in the UK institution for musculoskeletal radiology from overseas.

The National Health Service (NHS) offers plenty of means to enhance the musculoskeletal radiology experience for Indian radiologists in the UK, which includes clinical observerships,

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commonwealth fellowships, and Bracco Fellowships in which one usually shadows experienced musculoskeletal radiologists. On the other hand, global fellowships and post-Fellowship of the Royal College of Radiologists (FRCR) fellowships requiring the General Medical Council (GMC) registration can empower one to have access to hands-on experience.

In this article, we are going to discuss opportunities in detail, leading to enhanced clinical skills and professional development in the realm of musculoskeletal radiology. We also intend to provide an overview of probable hindrances, such as visa and immigration, which may hinder one's access to such opportunities.

For easy understanding, subspecialty musculoskeletal radiology attachments can be divided into two categories: (1) Those which do not require postgraduate medical qualification, an FRCR and (2) those which require postgraduate (FRCR) medical qualification and subsequent GMC registration and a full license to practice.

THOSE WHICH DO NOT REQUIRE POSTGRADUATE (FRCR) MEDICAL QUALIFICATION AND GMC REGISTRATION

Clinical observership

These are best done at larger tertiary care centers or teaching hospitals as they provide comprehensive musculoskeletal radiology services such as polytrauma imaging, bone, and soft tissue sarcoma imaging, rheumatology-related services, musculoskeletal ultrasound and interventions, and imaging-guided spinal interventions. These are institutions, often predominantly involved in research and teaching. Applying for a clinical observership in one such institution needs at least 6 months of careful planning in addition to gathering a range of documents as a part of Standard Visitor Visa.^[2] Furthermore, some teaching institutions may charge a nominal processing fee for observership applications. Unfortunately, observership period under this category could be limited up to 30 days. As these are entirely observership, they may require constant shadowing of a consultant radiologist. Overall, one has to plan visa, travel, and accommodation costs, which may skyrocket UK expenses given a higher cost of living and Indian National Rupee to GBP (British Pound) ratio. These are more useful for the experienced radiologist or any radiologist wanting to relocate to the UK for a short or long term as such observerships will help one acquaint with the NHS and musculoskeletal radiology departments.

Visiting the UK while appearing for final FRCR 2b may serve an ideal opportunity to have a clinical observership or attachment to one of such institutions as it can reduce travel and visa expenditure. One should carefully plan dates and

duration of clinical attachment to make these professional development activities cost effective. One should also be prepared for additional accommodation, food, and local transportation expenditure as these are not covered in observerships.

Common wealth medical fellowships

These opportunities get mid carrier academic medical professionals from low- and middle-income countries forming a part of commonwealth, to enhance their clinical skills and professional development. Funded by the UK Department for International Development, these medical fellowships dedicated to science and technology for development and strengthening health systems and capacity. For India, these fellowships involve cut-throat competition from central government-funded institutions' candidates and an interview at University Grants commission based at New Delhi.^[3]

Bracco fellowships

These fellowships are delivered by the European School of Radiology (ESOR) in partnership with Bracco. Every year, ESOR, in collaboration with Bracco, offers variable numbers of training opportunities in globally recognized institutions all over Europe, including the UK. These fellowships are offered in three categories: Clinical, management, and research. For clinical fellowships, one needs to demonstrate high scientific potential, contact, and get prior approval from a mentor in the institution of choice and satisfy membership criteria. Although training opportunities are funded, one can reimburse expenditure only after completion of fellowship and submission of the final report to the ESOR. These fellowships do not require GMC registration, and they are more akin to observerships. After being successful in acquiring Bracco fellowship, one has to obtain Visa and accommodation and travel expenditures should be taken into account.^[4]

THOSE WHICH REQUIRE POSTGRADUATE (FRCR) MEDICAL QUALIFICATION AND SUBSEQUENT GMC REGISTRATION AND A FULL LICENSE TO PRACTICE

Post-FRCR musculoskeletal radiology fellowship

All such opportunities are advertised on the NHS jobs website^[5] with Leeds, Birmingham, Stanmore, Imperial College London, and Oxford among a few world-renowned institutions offering such opportunities. These opportunities are suitable for Indian radiologists who have already relocated and working in the NHS for sometimes either as a consultant or as an NHS contributor-trust grade or staff and associate

specialist grade radiologist. These fellowships are extremely competitive, require UK specific documentation, including but not limited to, clinical audits, teaching, leadership and management experience, and publications, even to qualify for an interview. Once selected, clinical musculoskeletal radiology fellows enter into a 1-year training program. They are expected to contribute to clinical work, including reviewing and reporting radiographs, computed tomography (CT) scans, musculoskeletal magnetic resonance imagings, leading supervised multidisciplinary team meetings, and performing imaging (CT and US) guided interventions. In addition, fellows are provided with extensive teaching opportunities for registrars and allied staff as well as opportunities.

Global fellowship

This is a collaborative initiative among the RCR, Apollo Radiology International and The University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay.^[6] This involves a contractual agreement between the candidate and the employer for a fixed period of 3 years, 60% of general radiology, and the remaining 40% of work involve learning opportunities in the subspecialty of interest. As more and more institutions are offering such schemes, one should be aware that these fellowships typically involve 60% general radiology work and not hard-core supervised training specifically in musculoskeletal radiology. Many of the institutions, keen to join such programs, may not be a dedicated musculoskeletal services center. We recommend a in-depth discussion about the job description, including direct clinical care provision and subspecialty development activities between the candidate and the employer before accepting such roles. Unrealistic high expectation from the candidates may lead to dissatisfaction once relocated. It is the authors' perspectives that such schemes are ideally suited for the candidate who wants to develop subspecialty interest rather than who already has some subspecialty training either in India or abroad.

Locum consultant radiologist position

This is particularly suitable for candidates aiming to access post-clinical competency test dedicated musculoskeletal radiology fellowships or wishes to relocate to the UK for a long term. Ideally, for the former, one should take such clinical service delivery position in a district general hospital. This will provide one appropriate time to acclimatize to the NHS work pattern and plentiful opportunities to develop academic, quality improvement, and management skills. Such skills serve as a checklist, essential to get dedicated musculoskeletal radiology fellowship, otherwise considered extremely difficult to get into for non-European Economic Area medical

graduates. We wish to highlight that one has to complete a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration to have a substantive consultant radiologist position into the NHS, even after completing a dedicated musculoskeletal radiology fellowship. All such posts are advertised on the NHS jobs website.^[5]

Staff and associate specialist grade positions

GMC registration is the prerequisite for applying for such positions. Radiologists working in these positions usually have lesser clinical decision-making burden compared to consultant radiologists. They typically contribute to direct clinical care with limited access to management and leadership roles as they need not have complete FRCR qualification. These can also be accessed through medical training initiative, allowing international medical graduates to work within the NHS for 2 years on Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) Visa before returning to their home country. Although it may not require FRCR, one has to be successful in PLAB for GMC registration before the RCR can sponsor a candidate's Visa.^[7]

In conclusion, the UK NHS provide numerous possibilities for professional enhancement in musculoskeletal radiology depending on one's need and wish. The onus of choice among them remains on the candidates and their will to pursue musculoskeletal radiology as their long-term subspecialty.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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