

Differential Attainment Case Series

Case 6: Multiple Exam Failures caused by Lacking Peer Support

An IMG Yorkshire and Humber doctor in postgraduate training consistently delivered high-quality patient care. Clinical letters from patients described compassionate, clear communication, and excellent support. Supervisors across different rotations praised the resident doctor's professionalism, clinical reasoning, and teamwork.

The resident doctor achieved successful ARCP outcomes with very positive workplace-based feedback.

However, despite strong clinical performance, the resident doctor experienced multiple exam failures, leading to increasing self-doubt and concern about progression.

During an Educational Supervisor (ES) discussion, it emerged that the resident doctor had **no** peer support network and was preparing in isolation, with limited access to informal exam support and shared learning strategies.

Strengths:

Excellent patient feedback

Consistently positive clinical supervisor feedbacks across rotations

Successful ARCP progression

High professionalism and reflective practice

Persistence despite setbacks

Baseline Risk Signals:

Repeated exam failure despite strong workplace competence

Small Specialty

Isolation from peer networks

International Medical Graduate

Limited exposure to informal "exam culture" knowledge

Reduced confidence over time

Response by Educational Supervisor and/or Training Programme Director:

ES reframed the issue as a structural gap rather than individual deficiency

Resident doctor was encouraged to connect with resident doctors in other regions and specialty networks

A peer group was formed (regular check-ins, shared revision materials, mock practice)

Exam expectations and standards were clarified through peer discussion

Outcome:

Improved exam technique and structured preparation

Increased confidence and reduced isolation

Subsequent improvement in exam performance

Maintained strong ARCP outcomes and workplace feedback

System Learning:

Strong clinical performance does not guarantee exam success.

Lack of peer networks and isolation may contribute to differential attainment among IMGs.

Facilitated peer connection can act as a protective factor within training pathways.