

Oluwarantimi Atijosan talks about a new initiative

Open House Junior Doctor Style

Most house officers are shocked and ill-prepared when faced with all the responsibilities and lifestyle changes that go along with house jobs. Tiredness, cynicism and materialism soon begin to overshadow the enthusiasm felt on graduation day. Even in these shorter New Deal days, a junior's life can be at odds with maintaining an individual (and corporate) relationship with God.

This realisation led to the idea of an Open House. In Summer 2000 a group of Birmingham juniors saw a need for 'an informal venue where medics could meet together and share in the struggle to walk close with the Lord during the early years of clinical life'.¹ Like all the best ideas, it was simple. Open Houses meet regularly in a home (hence the name) and provide a forum where people can drop in and get to know one another. Juniors can talk about their concerns and struggles and encourage one another to face them as opportunities to witness for God and experience a deeper relationship with him.

Birmingham's Open House takes the format of regular meeting at one particular venue: they start at eight o'clock with snacks and follow on with a discussion and then 20 minutes of prayer. Afterward, there is some time for eating and fellowship.

Since then, various junior doctors' groups have sprung up all over the country, each one taking on a different form in order to serve the needs of its area. For example, having seen many friends struggle through their house jobs, one Liverpool-based medical couple began hosting monthly meetings. Their aim in meeting together is based on Scripture: 'And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as we see the Day approaching'.²

Leicester's Open House started from a *Saline Solution* course in 2000 and so the group is called Saline Solution. This Open House continues to meet at least once a month and aims to support fellow Christian juniors through fellowship, prayer and discussion. They plan to run *Saline Solution* courses in the future as they give good grounds for discussion and encouragement.

Interface began in the heart of one London A&E doctor who found herself working alongside a surprising number of Christians. This Open House is spluttering along, seeking ways to meet the particular needs of London juniors. Its main difficulty is finding a central London home to use as a regular venue.

The Dundee group started because an Aberdeen doctor had previously experienced Christian support and fellowship in

another city and wanted this to continue in his new location. Monthly meetings at different people's houses provide venues for fellowship and prayer. They too have problems, sharing the common problem of difficulty in keeping-up with which juniors are coming into their area.

Having given a sample of some of the groups meeting around the UK, I hope to inspire you to go and seek out your local group. Each one has individual strengths and weaknesses, quirks and challenges; still, they all seek to provide 'a forum for Christian junior doctors to meet to have fellowship and to challenge one another so that we not only survive but we face up to and enjoy the opportunity of being the best for God'.³

If you're a student or junior doctor then these are great places to be encouraged, to have fellowship, to develop friendships and deepen your relationship with God. If you already have enough encouragement, fellowship, friendship, then you could go and share this with others. Open House teams always welcome people who are willing to come and help out.

Even if your hair were somewhat greyer than the average junior doctor's, we would still love you to come along. These groups provide an established means for fostering fellowship between juniors and seniors at local levels. Open House groups always welcome more help: as a speaker, mentor (someone who is slightly further along the proverbial path), prayer-partner or even financier!

If there isn't already an Open House in your area, why not consider starting one yourself? To help you on your way, the Birmingham Group have written a starter pack (now being used internationally) that is available from CMF central office.⁴

However this article touches you, I hope you will be encouraged to know of this ministry as it seeks to further strengthen, encourage and enable junior doctors to grow and deepen their relationships with God.

Oluwarantimi Atijosan is a general surgical SHO in London

For more information please contact your Junior Doctor Representative on the back of CMF News or contact me at CMFInterface@hotmail.com.

References

1. Hawker, Tomlinson. *Open House Starter Pack*. London: CMF, 2000
2. Hebrews 10:24-25
3. Atijosan O, Beckles V. *Interface Leaflet*. London: CMF, 2000
4. Hawker, Tomlinson. *Op cit*