

Sarah Foot looks at the importance of being part of a local fellowship as a Junior Doctor

THE BODY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTORS

Being a junior doctor can be lonely at times. Switching rotations every four to six months, changing hospitals annually and then moving as you find training vacancies means it can be hard not to feel alone – not to mention the difficulty getting to church between on calls and visits home, and the disconnect you might feel because no one at church really understands your job. How can we connect with other Christian doctors?

God calls us to be in community with each other, from the beginning of Genesis when Adam is given Eve¹ to the growing church in Acts.² When we are together as one body we are strong and help grow the body of Christ.^{3,4} The more we work together, the more support we have to overcome obstacles in our Christian working life.

Some reading this may be part of an active local group, meeting regularly and feeling support from their fellow Christian doctors. For others you might feel like the only Christian in your hospital. I'm blessed at this time to be part of a local group. However, I have previously experienced the frustration and disappointment of failing to find fellowship.

God's majestic presence

Before anything else rejoice in time with God and delight in knowing he is with you in your workplace.⁵ On a busy day I find the commute to work, be it on the train, walking or driving, a chance to listen to worship music and talk to God (admittedly in my head on my packed commuter train!). Hurrying along the hospital corridor as I head to an arrest, it is a great comfort to know Jesus is taking those steps with me. These small moments help me to be prepared to look for fellowship opportunities with others.

Getting started

I moved to my current hospital six months ago, the smallest of the hospitals I've worked in, yet the one where I have been blessed with fellowship from colleagues. It started with the simple step of wearing a CMF lanyard. It only has www.cmf.org.uk on it, which has never attracted attention from non-CMF members. However, the lanyard helped me to meet other Christian doctors: they struck up conversations with me. These were colleagues from other departments, whom I would not have found were it not for my lanyard.

From these encounters I was invited to the local CMF group; unknown to me an active group meeting every couple of months already existed, almost on my doorstep. It inspired me to start a prayer group at our hospital. As I write this the group is small (admittedly only three of us) but I find strength in knowing God is with us. It is a fantastic way to start the day, and really does need only two of you.

Utilising CMF

Another useful resource is to keep your details up-to-date with CMF. I have previously contacted CMF to ask if there was anyone listed as

living or working near me. Fellowship is closer than you think! CMF also has the online link system, and I urge you if you read this and you are settled in an area, to offer to be an area or hospital link. In my first hospital I met with the link consultant, a scary prospect as an FY1 starting out, but it's great to know a senior doctor is keeping an eye on you. It was a great disappointment to discover my future hospitals did not have a named link. Please also post on the Junior Doctors' Facebook group. You may find another junior working nearby or even an established group. At the very least, others can pray for opportunities for fellow Christian doctors to find you.

As a member of the Junior Doctors' Committee I know we want to support junior doctors in staying connected. At university there is often a well-established group, with support from local consultants and GPs. It can be much harder as a junior doctor to find this network. At the Junior Doctors' Conference in October last year we introduced a 'Be Brave: encouragements from the front line' session, an opportunity for people to give a short testimony of something encouraging at work that God has done. Part of this was encouraging stories from local groups, some had started up from only two juniors deciding to meet. It proved to be very inspiring, and we shall certainly be making it a permanent fixture at future conferences.

In addition, we have two years' experience of running speciality and regional tables during meals at the conference. Another popular addition, this is an opportunity to meet with those in your local area or speciality. It is a surprisingly difficult logistical exercise, and one we are getting better at, but it's an excellent networking opportunity.

If connections locally are proving difficult do not forget about the national CMF body. Through volunteering such as through the Deep:ER programme or helping set up a Catalyst Team you will not only serve but also grow. Alternatively, attend a day conference. It can be daunting attending as a junior, but it is a valuable chance to meet senior colleagues who might mentor you in your working life.

It's not always easy finding other Christian medics at work but forming a support network of Christian doctors is crucial in our increasingly hostile world. Pray for opportunities to connect with others. Be brave, listen for those clues that a colleague may be a Christian and don't be afraid to tell others what you did on Sunday. Utilise CMF – post on the Facebook page, use the link system or contact the Junior Doctors' Committee for ideas and support. I would love you to come to the Junior Doctors' Conference in October (25-27) and to hear more inspiring stories of juniors connecting and reshaping their workplaces. Most importantly: Do not give up meeting together, but encourage one another.⁶

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references

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| 1. Genesis 2:18 | 3. Ephesians 4:11-13 | 5. Psalm 16:9-11 |
| 2. Acts 2:46-47 | 4. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 | 6. Hebrews 10:24-25 |