The Royal College of Anaesthetists Guide for Novice Trainees

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Introduction

Starting as a novice anaesthetist can be a daunting experience for trainees. Many have had little or no exposure to Anaesthesia during their foundation or medical school years. A new working environment, new drugs and the requirement to rapidly acquire both a new set of skills and the knowledge base to support them, results in a very steep learning curve in the early stages of training.

During their first three to six months, trainees are expected to complete their Initial Assessment of Competence and the 8 Basis of Anaesthetic Practice Training units. Although there are many resources available online and through the College Tutor network to support trainees during this key stage of their training, they can often be difficult to find. The Imperial School of Anaesthesia highlighted the value of creating a 'one-stop shop' for the essential information required by novices in the last edition of the *Bulletin*.

In late 2012, the RCoA Council approved the formation of a working group to create a starter pack for novice trainees. In addition to welcoming them to the specialty, it would include the key information and learning resources required during their first three to six months of training.

The Guide for Novice Anaesthetists working group met in February 2013 to define/agree the contents and format of the resource. The group included representatives from Training, Education, e-Learning, the Trainee Committee and the Imperial School of Anaesthesia Novice Course. Given the relatively short time frame for delivery of the project and to minimise costs, all further activity was conducted electronically.

Format and distribution

It was agreed that the Guide would be distributed to all novice trainees one month before starting their training programme, on a USB Memory Stick. The resources on the memory stick would be accessible using any browser and a 'website' style graphical user interface was designed to facilitate navigation. Trainees or trainers can copy the entire guide to run off their own hard disk.

Overview and structure of the guide

The contents of the guide are organised under eight main headings as detailed below:

- Home
- Introduction
- Novice Curriculum
- e-Learning Anaesthesia
- Getting Started
- Other Resources
- Tips and Tricks
- Help and Support

Positioning the mouse over a menu item gives the user access to the submenu structure and the contents of each section. The interface and navigation structure is simple to use, requiring little or no training (Figure 1). Pages and resources in the guide are accessed either directly from a menu item or from links within individual pages. Key documents and resources that a trainee may need to print or save to a smart phone open in a new window. Extensive cross-referencing allows the user to access resources from different sections in the guide. A small number of resources require internet access.

Home and introduction

The Home page contains a welcome message from the President and a brief history of the College. The Introduction section contains information about the contents of the guide and how it can be used, plus an overview of the training programme, including who's who, assessments and key contacts.

Novice curriculum

This section contains an overview of the novice curriculum, the IAC and each Basis of Anaesthetic Practice training unit. In each training unit, the information presented to the trainee includes the main learning objectives, a link to the specific section of the curriculum, links to the relevant e-Learning sessions from

Figure 1
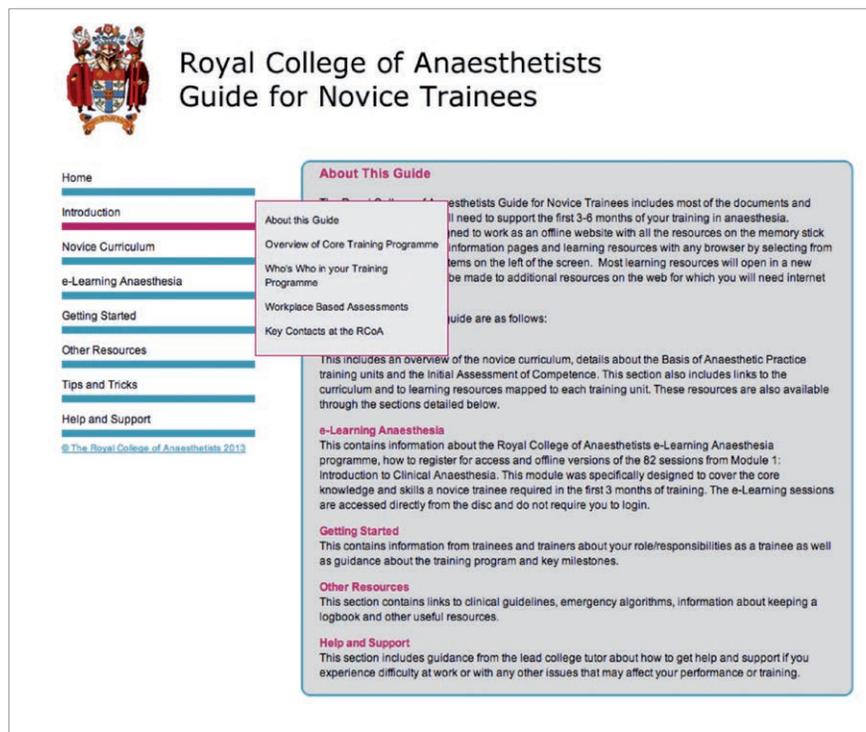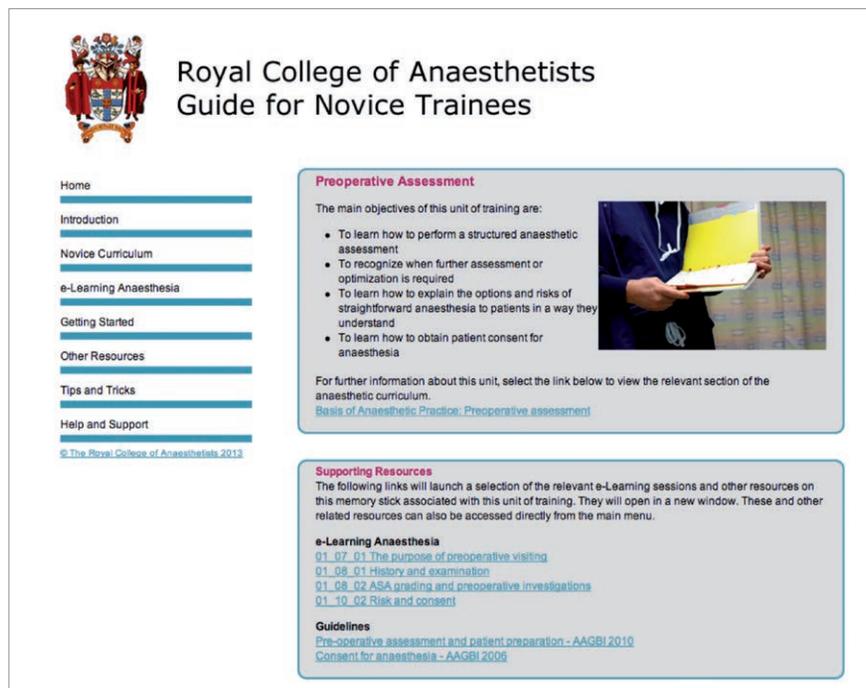Structure and navigation

Figure 2
Example of a Basis of Anaesthetic Practice training unit

Module 1 of e-LA and the AAGBI glossies/guidelines referenced in the curriculum. All are contained on the memory stick so the user does not have to have internet access to view the documents (Figure 2).

e-Learning Anaesthesia

This section contains an overview of e-LA and how to access the programme through the e-LfH Learning Management System. The 78 sessions from e-LA Module 1: Introduction to Clinical Anaesthesia have been loaded onto the memory stick (Figure 3). This module was specifically designed to cover the knowledge base required by novice anaesthetists. Making them accessible offline enables trainees and trainers to use them as a framework to support in theatre teaching, without the need to login. As demonstrated in the novice curriculum section, you will also find links back to the e-Learning sessions throughout the resource.
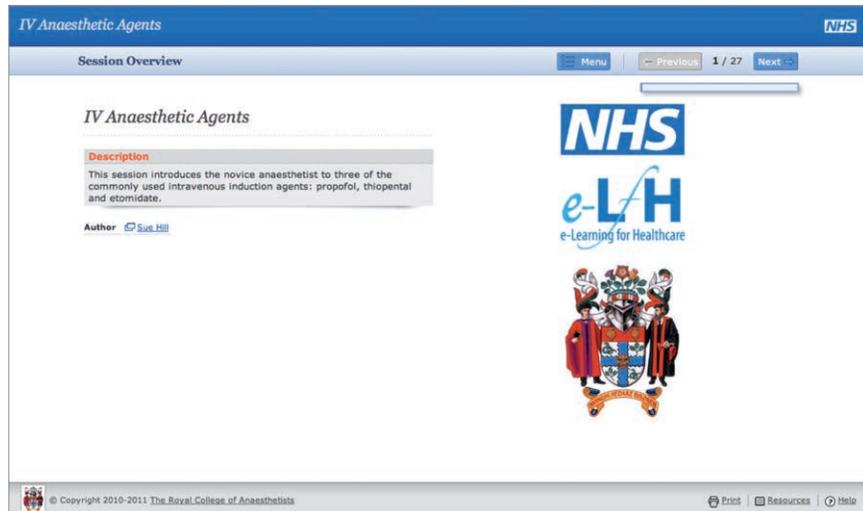
Getting started

The trainees on the working group felt strongly that there should be clearer guidance on what trainees are expected to do at, or by, various points in the first three to six months. We have therefore included a Timeline and Milestones section, as well as information and practical advice on pre-assessment, preparing your theatre, basic anaesthetic types, recovery and post op visits, on call and anaesthetic emergencies. Where possible, we have included direct links to relevant resources in other parts of the guide.

Other resources

As an extension of the 'one-stop shop' concept, this section contains a collection of the key guidelines relevant to novice training from the AAGBI, Resuscitation Council and Difficult Airway Society, in addition to a useful 'aide-memoire' of basic anaesthetic drugs; all of which can be printed or sent to a smart phone in PDF format. Guidance on how to keep a logbook,

Figure 3
Example of an e-LA session included on the memory stick

as well as information regarding the various online tools available from the RCoA, is also included.

Tips and tricks
This contains guidance on professionalism, how to get the most out of your training and a trainee focused Frequently Asked Questions section.

Help and support
Recognising that some trainees can find the first few months difficult or unsettling, the working group have included this short section with general guidance on how to get help and support.

How to use the guide for novice trainees
The guide will be available as a USB memory stick from July 2013 and will be distributed to all new trainees and College Tutors. There has been extensive consultation with key stakeholders during the development process, to ensure a balanced approach to the resources included on it. In addition to creating a 'one-stop shop' resource, the working group have also tried, wherever possible, to integrate the resources to facilitate learning and present the information in a co-ordinated way.

The Guide for Novice Trainees has been designed as learning resource, not as a prescriptive course. There are no right or wrong ways to use it. The working group hope that both novice trainees and trainers will find it a useful resource that supports the key first few months on the training programme. The working group would welcome feedback from users regarding the contents and/or structure of the guide, for consideration for future editions. Please send comments regarding this to: Natalie Bell (nbell@rcoa.ac.uk).

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