



UCL

A photograph of a diverse group of women sitting in an audience, looking towards the left. The women are in profile, and the background is softly blurred with some stage lights. The text is overlaid on a dark grey rectangular background.

The Estelle Wolfson Emerging Women Leaders Programme at UCL

A report prepared for Lady Estelle Wolfson
2021 report

Thank you for your continued support of The Estelle Wolfson Emerging Women Leaders Programme at UCL. We are thrilled to share this report with you just over two years since the programme was launched. It details the achievements and impact of this year's programme on the lives of these incredible women, as well as our vision for its future.

Aims and objectives

Women are predicted to become the majority in the medical profession in the next few years. However, at present, they remain under-represented in senior leadership positions. The Estelle Wolfson Emerging Women Leaders Programme is designed to address this under-representation by helping participants to develop the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours for future senior leadership positions within the medical profession.

Our objectives when establishing the programme were:

- To build on the success of the first two Estelle Wolfson Emerging Women Leader Programmes at the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSE), and the Royal College of Physicians (RCP).
- To engage high-profile, female medical leaders (from UCL and beyond), with the aim of supporting emerging women leaders.
- To create a bespoke course for female doctors, who are interested in, and show potential for, leadership positions.
- To create a short, blended learning component to the course, drawing on UCL's digital educational technology expertise.
- To explore the potential for collaboration with other medical schools, and for the international expansion of the course.
- To work with the RCSE and RCP organisers to share experience, and to enhance networking opportunities for the programme participants.
- To embed the programme in UCL Medical School, so it is sustainable for the future.

Recruitment

The recruitment campaign went live in the spring of 2021 and was advertised via Twitter and to UCL Medical School alumni through the school's newsletter.

From an application pool of 50, we recruited 12 women to take part in the course this year. We followed a similar selection criteria to the first course which included prioritising a mix of seniority, specialty, ethnicity and those who had not had the opportunity to be part of a leadership course up until now.

Face-to-face teaching

After receiving positive feedback about the online elements of the course from the first cohort, we decided to run the 2021 course completely online. Sessions took place on Zoom, once every three weeks, from 27th May until 29th September 2021.

Each session ran from 09:30 to 15:30. The structure of the day was varied and included small group work; inspirational leaders sharing their journey to leadership positions; and action learning sets, requiring the participants to actively get involved in problem solving within teams.

Each day included a theoretical component where we shared leadership theory from the literature. These sessions were delivered by the Course Directors Professor Dame Jane Dacre, Professor of Medical Education and Ms Deirdre Wallace, Associate Professor of Medical Education. Small group facilitation was provided by Tina Nyazika and Cat Phillips, both senior educators and UCL coaches.

Inspirational leaders

We had the privilege of hearing from multiple guest speakers, all of whom are exceptional, female leaders. They spoke candidly about their leadership journeys, the barriers they have faced and how they overcame them, and their career highlights.

This year we hosted:

- Dr Suzy Lishman, pathologist and former President of the Royal College of Pathologists
- Professor Jenny Higham, gynaecologist and Principal at St George's Medical School
- Professor Lesley Regan, gynaecologist and former President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu, pharmacologist, Professor of Pharmacy at UCL, and UCL Pro-Vice Provost for Africa and the Middle East
- Ms Celia Ingham Clark, surgeon and Medical Director for Clinical Effectiveness at NHS England
- Dr Henrietta Hughes, general practitioner and former Medical Director at NHS England
- Dr Jayne Kavanagh, women's health campaigner and Associate Clinical Professor at UCL Medical School
- Professor Geeta Menon, ophthalmologist, surgeon and postgraduate dean
- Dr Faye Gishen, palliative care physician and Director at UCL Medical School
- Professor Dame Parveen, gastroenterologist and Emerita Professor of Medicine and Education at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry

On the final day of the course, the participants all shared their own leadership journey to date. These included the key learning points from the theoretical aspects of the course as well as the nuggets of wisdom shared by the guest speakers.



Above: September 2021 reunion of the first Emerging Women Leaders Programme cohort

Mentoring

Each participant was paired with a mentor, and encouraged to meet for a mentoring session approximately every six weeks. The mentors were paired to reflect the interests of the participants. A guide to being a mentor and a mentee was provided.

To support each session and provide the blended learning component, an online repository was created where course materials were stored, and an informal WhatsApp group was set up for participants to share their thoughts and ideas. Participants were also encouraged to keep a reflective log of what they had been learning throughout the course.

Informal feedback for these sessions was extremely positive. The participants particularly liked the opportunity to interact with successful female role models. The WhatsApp group and online resources remain very popular. Participants report feeling very supported by their mentors and our mentors are very much enjoying contributing to the development of our participants.

The impact of COVID-19

The pandemic continued to make an impact on the course in several ways. All of the participants were patient-facing clinicians who have worked continuously since March 2020. As a result, there was a sense of fatigue and of feeling disheartened amongst the group. Having a safe space to speak to experts about how they were feeling, their future personal career plans and their mental health, was invaluable. Many commented on how they became stronger emotionally and began to recognise their own talents as the course progressed.

Participants from the first course have formed a very cohesive group, and continue to keep in touch with each other regularly. We organised a social gathering in September at UCL, and intend to host a similar session in early 2022.

“The course challenged my preconceived ideas of what a leader looks like and how they behave. It motivated me to think about solutions innovatively and put plans into action compassionately.”

Dr. Alice Wort, 2021 participant and microbiologist

The future of the programme

We have robust plans in place to begin recruitment for the third and final Estelle Wolfson Emerging Women Leaders Programme in early 2022. We advertised in December 2021 and applications closed on 14th January 2022. We will publish six dates for Zoom sessions to occur on a fortnightly basis from May 2022. This will allow ample time for the clinicians to request the necessary time off. Now that the programme's scope has expanded beyond London, the course will remain fully online so that we can recruit nationally.

“The course was instrumental in helping me find my leadership style, and I am now receiving positive feedback from the people I lead. Learning what works for my leadership style has been tremendously rewarding.”

Dr. Luveon Tang, 2021 participant and Surgical Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Thank you for enabling us to establish and develop The Estelle Wolfson Emerging Women Leaders Programme at UCL. With emerging evidence of the negative impact of the pandemic on women's careers, this unique programme is more important than ever before.

We are deeply grateful for your support and look forward to updating you again next year.

For more information, please contact:

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“I think about or use something from the course almost every day. The skills I developed have been very useful, and hearing from so many influential women about their struggles with imposter syndrome empowered me to ignore those negative thoughts and believe in myself more.”

Dr Sarah Worboys, 2021 participant and
General Practitioner

