

Royal College of General Practitioners and Warwick Medical School
Annual Education, Research and Innovation Symposium
16th June 2016 - Abstract Submission Form

PRESENTER'S DETAILS Session E. Doing Things Differently		
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Category Research		
Authors Miss Stephanie Tristram Miss Pareena Patel Dr Joanne Reeve		Title of Study The fall and rise of generalism: Perceptions of generalist practice amongst medical students.
What's the problem you are tackling? The Royal College of General Practitioners describes generalism as expertise in whole person medical care. According to the Shape of Training review, there is a need to train more generalists to deal with the changing pressures that face today's health services, such as growing numbers of patients with multiple chronic morbidities. General practitioners (GPs) are the largest number of trained generalists, however evidence suggests that practicing GPs experience a number of barriers to the delivery of expert generalist care. Work is underway to address these barriers at postgraduate level. However there has not been research into this at undergraduate level. This study looks at medical students opinions of generalist practice at Warwick Medical School (WMS). It explores medical students existing understanding of expert generalist practice, and experiences of training within the curriculum. In order to highlight areas of work needed to address the Shape of Training recommendations.		

How did/will you do it?

We carried out a survey study involving students from all four years of WMS. Normalisation Process Theory was used to inform survey design and data collection under the four domains of work predicted to be necessary for new ways of working to become embedded into daily practice. The four domains being sense making, engagement, action and monitoring. The survey was sent out via e-mail and two reminders were sent during the two weeks of data collection. The qualitative data was analysed through the constant comparative method to generate descriptive codes that were grouped into higher themes to describe enablers and barriers of work being carried out in the four domains. These themes were further analysed using a traffic light system.

What did you find?

The results highlight key enablers and barriers to developing generalist expertise within the WMS curriculum. Results show a variable understanding and engagement with generalist practice at WMS. Some students highlighted a recognition of the importance of these skills to meet today's complex health needs, and a desire to know more. Some highlighted a lack of specific training, observation and practicing of the skills involved in generalist practice along with a lack of time and resources to ensure ongoing work using EGP. There was no clear evidence why student opinions were divided.

Why does this matter?

Generalist practice is inconsistently understood at an undergraduate level. A number of barriers exist, which need to be addressed to integrate generalist practice into the medical school curriculum, and thus increase the number of trained generalists. Our survey highlights some initial areas of focus, e.g. protected time in the curriculum for teaching, observing and practicing of expert generalist skills and for teaching staff to be taught the importance of generalism. This would enable students to have a universal experience of EGP and address the inconsistent perceptions that we revealed.