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WALES

So, you want to be a doctor?

An evaluation of a pan-Wales widening
access event organised by RCGP Wales

March 2022



Overview

On Saturday 11 September 2021 RCGP Wales held its annual, bilingual, widening access event aimed at parents and pupils from all parts of Wales.

The event reached over 200 participants with participants coming from schools across all of Wales. The event was facilitated by volunteers made up of practising GPs and current medical students and staff from both Cardiff University and Swansea University.

Design and implementation

Overall design

The decision to continue with an online widening access event was made easier by the success of the first event in 2020 and the strong links that exist between RCGP, its members and external bodies including Careers Wales, The Seren Network, Cardiff University, Swansea University and Health Education & Improvement Wales (HEIW).

All stakeholders were instrumental in promoting and advertising the events and identifying speakers, all of whom were GPs. This ensured good promotion of our theme of 'General practice as a career'. Other speakers have complementary roles at Welsh medical schools and in some cases are directly involved in medical school admissions. Additionally, on-the-day support was sought from Welsh speaking members of Cardiff University admission team and bilingual medical students from both Welsh medical schools. All who participated on the day gave their time freely.


The success of the event was aided with all participants being engaged early in the planning process. Everyone was regularly updated, sent all the appropriate materials in advance, and engaged in a virtual 'dry run' a week before the event was due to be held.

Session plan

The day was designed to give pupils an insight into 1) the process of applying to medical school; 2) what it's like to be a medical student; and 3) an insight into the realities of medicine and a career in general practice.

Five bilingual talks were developed to reflect the current application process and particularly the influences of Covid.

Sessions in both English and Welsh were delivered over a five-hour period. Each session was supported by medical students who monitored the chat function and responded to questions



posed by pupils during the talk. Participating pupils had, prior to the event, been asked to submit questions they would like answered and these had been shared with all speakers. Medical students and GPs monitoring the chat (chat busters) answered as many questions as possible or asked them of the speaker at the end of the talk.

Table 1 - Event schedule illustrating the timings of bilingual sessions.

Morning - English talks	
9:30-10:25	Parent Talk
10:30	Student introduction
10:40	Applying to medical school
11:15	Personal statements
11:45	Break
12:00	Medical interviews
12:30	Careers choices
13:00	Medical student
13:30	Close
Afternoon - Welsh Talks	
14:15	Student introduction
14:25	Applying to medical school
14:55	Personal statements
15:25	Break
15:40	Medical interviews
16:10	Careers choices
16:40	Medical student
17:10	Close

Evaluation

Registration and attendance

Between March and September 2021, 492 pupils and parents/teachers signed up for the event. 342 pupils signed up for the English stream, whilst 67 signed up for the Welsh stream.

Of the parents signing up, 83 signed up for the English session, and 8 for the Welsh session (given the low turnout of Welsh parents, all 8 were contacted before the event to ascertain if they would be happy to join the English Stream, all replied affirmatively). All registrants were sent a pre-event questionnaire and within a few days of attendance at the event, they were also sent a post-event questionnaire.

The pre-event questionnaire was returned by 184 pupils and 34 parents. Post-event questionnaires were returned by 70 pupils and 11 parents.

Was this a pan-Wales event?

Analysis of pupils' registrations and responses from the pre-event and post-event questionnaires revealed that we successfully achieved a pan-Wales distribution (Table 2). Detailed analysis (not shown here) revealed that whilst areas such as Gwynedd or Cardiff had over 50% of schools represented this wasn't the case in Powys which had a third of schools represented. Of note is the fact that there were a significant number of registrations from outside of Wales.

Table 2. Pupil distribution according to region

Area of Wales	Registrations	Pre-event	Post-event
Clwyd	22	15	8
Dyfed	30	11	7
Gwent	33	15	7
Gwynedd	33	10	8
Powys	6	2	1
South Glam	125	83	28
Mid Glam	29	13	0
West Glam	44	14	6
UK non-Wales	30	12	5
Non-UK & non-Wales	4	2	0

Attendance

All pupils watched the webinar from home or from a private address and not at school. Though most logins were made by single individuals, a further analysis of the post-event questionnaire revealed that 5 logins were shared by 24 pupils. At the time of watching the sessions, logins were recorded and a total of 162 pupils (135 English and 27 Welsh) and 34 parents. If a similar proportion of pupil logins were shared by more than one pupil, extrapolation from the post event questionnaire data suggests that possibly 203 pupils watched the webinar.

As a percentage of those that originally signed up for the event, 39.7 % actually joined, going by the login figure, but this may have been as high as 49.6% (from the extrapolated figure).

In terms of parents, 41% of registrants attended on the day and a third of these answered the post-event questionnaire.

Outcome questions

Pupils and parents were asked to answer questions both pre and post-event so that comparisons could be made to assess 'learning' gain (Table 2).

Table 2 - Evaluation questions pre- and post-event.

Pupil questions	Parent questions
How confident do you feel that you will get into medical school?	How confident are you that your child will get into medical school?
How confident do you feel about writing your personal statement?	How confident do you feel in your knowledge of what is needed in a personal statement?
How confident do you feel about performing at your medical school interview?	How confident are you in your knowledge of medical school interviews?
How confident are you in your knowledge of a medical student's life?	How confident are you in your knowledge of medical student life?
How confident are you in your knowledge of career options for doctors?	How confident are you in your knowledge of career options for doctors?
How confident are you in your knowledge of what being a GP offers you in terms of work/life balance and variety of day-to-day work?	How confident are you in your knowledge of what being a GP offers in terms of work/life balance and variety of day-to-day work?
Question on current thinking about becoming a GP	

Pre-event questionnaires were returned by 184 pupils. (46% of registrations).

Fig 1 Year distribution of respondents (pre-event questionnaire)

Year 10	1
Year 11	29
Year 12	81
Year 13	68
Other	5



Pupil feedback on event content

Q1. How confident do you feel that you will get into medical school?

Post-event, the proportion of pupils who were either extremely or somewhat confident they would get into medical school rose from 38% to 67%.

Q2. How confident do you feel about writing your personal statement?

Post-event, the proportion of students who were either extremely or somewhat confident about writing a personal statement rose from 28% to 74%.

Q3. How confident do you feel about performing at your medical school interview?

Post-event, the proportion of students who were either extremely or somewhat confident about performing in a medical school interview rose from 19% to 57%.

Q4. How confident are you in your knowledge of a medical student's life?

Post-event, the proportion of students who were either extremely or somewhat confident in their knowledge of medical student life rose from 46% to 72%.

Q5. How confident are you in your knowledge of career options for doctors?

Post-event, the proportion of students who were extremely confident in their knowledge of career options for doctors rose from 59% to 74%.

Q6. How confident are you in your knowledge of what being a GP offers you in terms of work/life balance and variety of day-to-day work?

Post-event, the proportion of students who were either extremely or somewhat confident in their knowledge of what GP offers in terms of work life balance and variety rose from 45% to 91%.

Q7. Which answer reflects your current thinking?

Pre-event (n=184)

- I would like to be a GP in the f... 28
- I would not like to be a GP in t... 40
- I am unsure whether I would li... 116



Post-event (n=70)

- I would like to be a GP in the f... 17
- I would not like to be a GP in t... 8
- I am unsure whether I would li... 45



Post-event, the percentage of pupils who did not think they would like to be a GP reduced from 22% to 11% and those who thought they might like to be GP rose from 15% to 24%.



Q8. If this event were to run again, would you recommend it to your friends and fellow students?

100% of students answered affirmatively to this question.

Conclusion

RCGP Wales, with the support of several stakeholders and colleagues, has again delivered a successful online, bilingual, widening-access activity that has been accessible to pupils from across Wales.

This was well received by pupils and parents alike and has proven to improve the confidence of pupils in all aspects associated to their knowledge, understanding and preparation regarding their medical school application, and prospect of pursuing a career in medicine.

The remote model of delivery has provided the ability to support and target pupils across Wales at the same time, with the same high-quality content, and array of speakers as might have been experienced in a model of face-to-face delivery.


Next steps

The repeated success of this year's event along with the data it has generated, can be built on for the future. Continuing with a remote model of delivery has presented several opportunities that were previously unlikely or unavailable, aiding to the event's success as being a pan-Wales and equitable model of delivery.

Our activity has proven to have a positive impact on pupil confidence, awareness and understanding, alongside career aspirations.

Going forward, we're keen to work closely with all key stakeholders to be able to provide an even more inclusive offer for aspiring medics across Wales.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with organisations who share our ethos of widening access in order to discuss the success of our activity and to explore further partnership opportunities.





Appendices

Appendix 1: Student free-text feedback

Following the webinar, the students were asked “if you have any comments or suggestions about the webinar or how we could improve it for next year, please let us know....”

All 9 comments received are shown below:

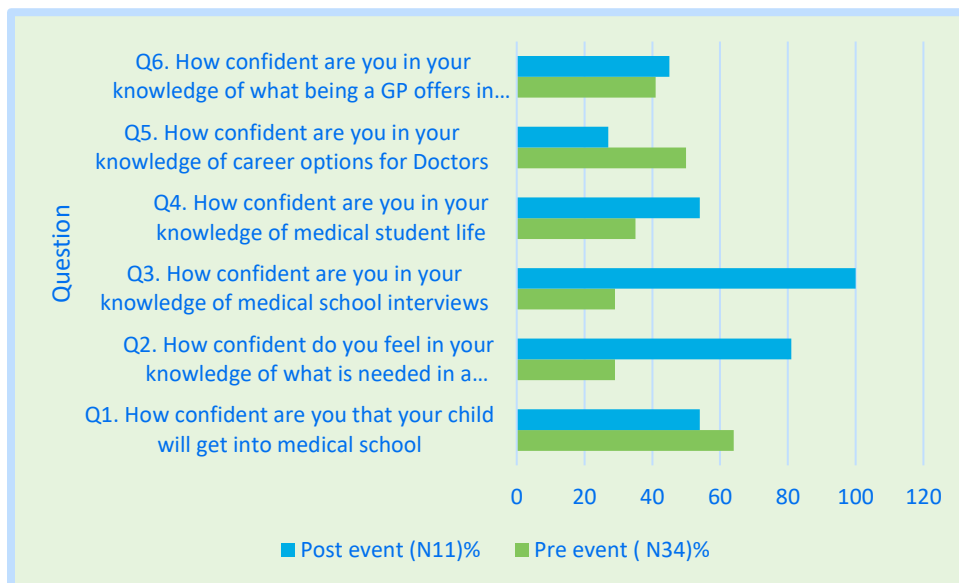
- *No but it was a good experience.*
- *Diolch yn fawr iawn am sesiwn diddorol iawn gyda llawer o wybodaeth a chyngor defnyddiol. Ni fedra i feddwl am unrhywbeth a fuaswn yn newid!*
- *Thank you very much for organising this event, it was really helpful! I apologise for dropping in and out of the event, my connection was a little bad today. Perhaps it may be better to host the event on Zoom next time as you could then split the attendees into groups, and they may feel more comfortable with asking questions/unmuting.*
- *It was great and very helpful.*
- *Many thanks.*
- *Very informative and gives realistic insight into the med school application process- Thank you!*
- *The webinar was very successful in providing a lot of information and clarity about medical schools specifically. Despite this, it was a lot of information to process and was overwhelming at times. In the future I would prefer to attend more sessions but in shorter sessions. For example, splitting the 5 aspects discussed into 3 separate webinars making it more accessible for those who only want to focus on particular aspects of the webinar while also ensuring it isn't too much information too quickly. I do like the fact that you've recorded the individual sections and that they will be available online. Personally, I would've preferred to be made aware of this before having attended live as it would've been easier for me as student life is extremely busy and taking out 3 hours of a Saturday is a big amount of time. Although, I still found the webinar helpful and worthwhile. Diolch yn fawr.*
- *I thought the webinar was extremely useful and I particularly liked how it was clearly split up into sections. Thank you to everyone involved!*
- *It would have been nice to have more information on possible career choices outside of the general career choices as a doctor.*

Appendix 2: Parental feedback questionnaire

Parents were asked to score their confidence on a range between being extremely confident to being extremely unconfident. The graphs below show differences in answers in the confident range prior to (n=34) and following (n=11) to the event.


1. How confident are you that your child will get into medical school?
2. How confident do you feel in your knowledge of what is needed in a personal statement?
3. How confident are you in your knowledge of medical school interviews?
4. How confident are you in your knowledge of medical student life?
5. How confident are you in your knowledge of career options for doctors?
6. How confident are you in your knowledge of what being a GP offers in terms of work/life balance and variety of day-to-day work?

Fig 2. Pre and post-event percentage of parents feeling confident or extremely confident with respect to the question being asked.





Appendix 3: Post-event questionnaire feedback comments from parents.

- *I found the information about the application process very helpful and informative, especially regarding the aptitude tests (which I had no idea about) and the fact that different medical schools teach in very different ways.
I would've liked to hear a bit more about life as a med student and what happens post qualification. There was a little bit there today, but I think we were running out of time!
I feel fortunate that I found out about the session from a 'doctor' friend. I think it would be useful to hear through school too. Maybe our school was notified but I know that Tom wasn't informed by them.
In summary really, really helpful.
Thank you for giving up your weekend!*
 - *Really enjoyed, thank you but trying to work out where to study still seems like a massive task!*
 - *Include medical students or newly qualified talking.*
 - *Thank you very much it was really helpful in terms of knowing what the steps are to applying.*
 - *Really informative, all questions asked during the webinar were answered, I do feel less anxious about what the process is for my daughter and hope that she now manages to achieve the grades that she needs to apply. Thank you all for your time.*
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 - Dr Heidi Phillips: GP and Associate Professor for Primary Care at Swansea University
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 - Karen Morris: RCGP Cymru Wales
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