

RCGP briefing: Potential merits of training additional doctors

Westminster Hall Debate, 17th January 2023

Overview

General practice is the cornerstone of the NHS, helping around 50 million people in England every year, carrying out 370 million consultations last year. So, when GPs and their patients tell us that general practice is in crisis, we should all be concerned.

Targets to deliver more GPs continue to be drastically missed. We simply do not have enough GPs to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population, with increasingly complex needs, on top of managing the fallout from the pandemic.

In order to ensure GP workload is manageable, we must have the right staffing levels. This in turn, will help reduce stress and burnout, as well as increase retention rates and job satisfaction.

Key Statistics

GP Workforce

- Despite an agreement from Government that we need 6,000 extra GPs the number of FTE fully qualified GPs has fallen by 5% between September 2015 and 2021 whilst the population is 4% larger and health problems are getting more complex.
- There were 45 fully qualified FTE GPs per 100,000 patients in April 2022 compared to 52 in September 2015, when records began. This means that on average, GPs are currently looking after 2,056 patients, which is more than 10% more patients than in 2015.
- 42% of GPs say that they are planning to quit the profession in the next five years.

Multi-Disciplinary Teams in General Practice/Additional Roles

- Over half of GPs (57%) surveyed in our annual tracking survey said that their practice does not have access to the support and guidance to effectively integrate the new staff roles.
- 74% of respondents to our survey said that their practice does not have sufficient physical space necessary to accommodate new staff.

GP Workload

- On average, as of July 2022, GPs look after 2,247 patients - 16% more patients than in 2015.
- Between 2019-21, the number of clinical administration tasks delivered by GPs in England rose by 28%, up to 107 million in 2021.
- 68% of GPs say they don't have enough time to adequately assess and treat patients during appointments. (RCGP Tracking Survey 2021-22)
- 64% of GPs say they don't have enough time during appointments to build the patient relationships they need to deliver quality care. (RCGP Tracking Survey 2021-22)
- 65% of GPs say that patient safety is being compromised due to appointments being too short. (RCGP Tracking Survey 2021-22)
- 75% of GPs said that encouraging specialists to refer patients to other specialists themselves where appropriate rather asking GPs to re-refer them would make a significant difference to GP workloads.
- It is impossible for most GPs to manage the workload required in the time allocated, meaning on average they work 10 hours more a week than their contracted hours.

What do we want

With the right staffing levels, GP workload will be manageable, which in turn, will reduce stress and burnout. Retention rates and job satisfaction will be higher.

- Publish a detailed plan to achieve and go beyond the targets of 6000 extra full time equivalent GPs and 26,000 additional staff in non-GP roles.
- Make the funding rules more flexible so practices are free to use money from the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme to hire the staff they need, including nurses, and invest in supporting supervision and training to better integrate teams.
- Expand the number of GP training places by at least 10% year on year. This must sit alongside action to increase the number of trainers and improvements to premises to further expand teaching in general practice.
- An easier process for international doctors who complete their training as NHS GPs to apply for long-term visas to stay and work in the UK, bringing the situation into line with trainee doctors in other parts of the NHS.
- Provide extra funding for practices serving the most deprived populations to recruit and retain staff in under-doctored areas, as part of a comprehensive review of the Carr-Hill formula.

Further information can be found on [our website](#).