

Extended general practice placements: Do they promote breadth and depth of student experience?

A O'Regan, D McGrath, J O'Doherty, G McCombe, A Hannigan, W Cullen

University of Limerick Graduate Entry Medical School

Outline

- Background
- Aims
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion



Background

- Shift towards community based medical education
- Extended placements internationally
- Nationally
- Time to reflect on action



Aims

- To explore the educational potential/ learning outcomes of students during the 18-weeks on clinical placement in General Practice
- To capture the breadth and depth of medical students' clinical experience at three time points

Study population

- UL EHS REC approval
- Pilot study (April 2016)
- Timeframe August 2016- April 2017
- Recruitment via email
- Participants (n= 32)
- Qualitative (focus group study)
- Weeks 2,10,18 in semesters 1 and 2

Methods

- Qualitative focus group study
- Digitally recorded
- Transcribed verbatim
- NVIVO v11
- Thematic analysis
- ‘Flip-flop’ between data collection and analysis
- Changing question schedule
- Four overarching themes

Stage 1: Preparing data

Stage 2: Generating codes

Stage 3: Collating codes into themes

Stage 4: Reviewing codes and themes

Stage 5: Applying the coded template to remaining data

Stage 6: Categorising and legitimising coded themes



Overarching Theme 1: Logistical and support issues

- Diverse experiences *‘there should be more urban GPs... like who wants to commute an hour’*
- Commuting *‘I found it very socially isolating... in the beginning I found it very academically isolating...I wasn’t near a library and I was cut off from the rest of my peers’*
- Isolation
- Lack of standardisation *‘a bit more of a guideline or a bit of a framework... we would like to have a more concrete list saying you need to know this by this time’*
- Framework



Overarching Theme 2: Learning culture

- Learning environment
- Relationship with GP
- Becoming part of the team
- Interpersonal skills
- Developing confidence

'I was expecting to see just a lot of coughs and colds but when I got there... the diversity of patients and problems and consults has been amazing'

'But the way I got in was through the receptionist... I did reception for a day and I think after that he kind of remembered me... he was then happy for me to talk to people so when there was something interesting I talked to them. And the more I did the more he kind of let me do afterwards'

'...really relaxed environment... lots of patients and we are given lots of time to see them so we can learn about chronic disease'



Overarching Theme 3: self-perceived learning

- Patient-centred
- Evolution of skills
- Development of capability
- Increased responsibility
- Improved confidence

'...very basic stuff, history, BP... we are hungry to get our hands on stuff...but 90% of what I'm seeing is the same thing'

'it is just a point in time when the staff is more comfortable with you and you are more comfortable with the staff, and they say 'we have five more people waiting, could you just give them flu injections... so you take some of the labour roles'

'taking blood, that was just one thing... with doing it over and over again repetitively I felt very confident at the end of it... giving injections... I was confident doing that as well, and even just talking to patients. So I felt my confidence did grow over the eighteen weeks'



Overarching Theme 4: Duration of placement

- Diversity of opinion

'the eighteen weeks allows up to build up relationships with patients... a rapport with them'

'it's twice as long as it should be'

- Personal factors

'Before the GP placement I was a bit sceptical about the length of the placement and I thought that it was too long. I feel now that it is an adequate time. I think because it is eighteen weeks, because of this there was a lot more responsibility handed to the student'

- Relationship factors

'I don't see what extra benefit I would have got after thirteen weeks or so from the GP. I don't think I gained anything after that personally'

- Quality of experience

'particularly for someone who is considering a career as a GP, that the eighteen weeks is quite a good length of attachment. As my GP would say, it tests your empathy and the stamina of your empathy.'

What this study adds

- Insight into the progression, context and culture of student experience and the hidden curriculum of extended GP placements
- Advances our understanding on how learning occurs in general practice placements and inform curriculum development

Limitations and implications for future research

Limitations

- Small cohort, restricted to those based in Limerick

Implications

- Continue the study to capture a wider cohort and until data saturation is reached
- Further study to understand why it works well in certain locations
- Study on implementation fidelity

Acknowledgements

- Focus group participants and their GP tutors
- INMED/ IMC RIME who funded the study