

GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship Program
Program Final Report, April 2009

FirstWave

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Scholarship Overview

The GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship Program was introduced to create an opportunity for medical students in their first or second year to experience General Practice under the guidance of a dedicated General Practice Preceptor. The GP preceptors were carefully chosen to provide a quality exposure and were typically Registrars within the GP training program. The pilot program was run in collaboration with the University of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne and the University of Notre Dame, Sydney along with their respective Regional Training Providers (RTPs).

The Universities assisted with selection of the student participants, delivery of the First Wave Seminars (as appropriate), and implementation and management of the program (in conjunction with GPSN and the partner Regional Training Provider).

The RTPs were responsible for selecting First Wave practices for Clinical and Academic Placements and identifying appropriate GP Preceptors to supervise the students.

RTPs were also responsible for providing active engagement and support to the First Wave scholars to ensure that they developed a good understanding of the training environment and opportunities in a GP career. They were also required to coordinate the information delivered to GP Preceptors and practices participating in the program, and to monitor the progress of students whilst they were in their placements.

The Objectives

The main objective of the GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship Program is to provide an early positive exposure to medical students, with young enthusiastic GPs, to encourage students to consider careers in general practice.

This was achieved by offering a combination of clinical and academic placements in general practice across three universities.

Summary of Findings

Overall, it appears that the First Wave Scholarship program is meeting its objective of not only providing students with a positive experience in the General Practice specialty, but also encouraging them to consider General Practice as a career choice; this was borne out in both the results from the quantitative survey undertaken with First Wave scholar recipients, as well as from the independent qualitative research which was conducted by one of the academic scholars amongst ten of the First Wave scholars (see Appendix A for the qualitative report).

A total of 24 students were accepted into the program of which 23 students completed the program; five students completed an Academic Scholarship which involved completing four supervised clinical placements as well as a dedicated research project, and seventeen students completed a Clinical Scholarship which involved completing six supervised clinical placements.

The results from the survey indicated that both Academic and Clinical scholars enjoyed a positive experience with the program. Some of the key findings to emerge from the survey with first wave scholars included:

- All students either agreed or strongly agreed that they found the program 'extremely beneficial' and would recommend the program to other students.
- There was general agreement amongst the students that the program has improved their understanding of the role of General Practice in our health system, the scope of the General Practice specialty, as well as the various opportunities available through the General Practice specialty (all 96% agreement). However, a proportion of the students (17%) did not gain a better understanding of the General Practice training program or of the remuneration in General Practice (30%).
- All but one student stated that their experience with the program has positively impacted their ambitions towards a career in General Practice – with the remaining student indicating that they have already decided to become a GP and that the scholarship program has not changed that perception.
- More than three-quarters (78%) of the First Wave scholars stated that they are considering General Practice as a career choice - and none see General Practice as a last resort.
- Whilst students found organizing initial meetings with their clinical and/or academic supervisor and organizing their scholarship placement sessions convenient to do (78% and 83% agreement respectively), a high proportion of students (43%) found the application process 'fairly challenging' and less than two-thirds (61%) agreed that the location of their placement medical centre was convenient.
- The vast majority of students came away from their scholarship experience with an understanding of the role General Practice plays in the long-term health care of patients (96%) and the continuity of care concept that makes General Practice unique (91%), however,
- A group of students did not get to take part in GP preventative health care activities during their clinical placements (17%) or in simple tasks such as taking blood pressure measurements and immunization (35%).

Another very positive outcome from the pilot of the First Wave program is that the paper that one of the University of Melbourne Academic scholars co-authored, is currently being reviewed by the journal 'Australian Family Physicians' for publication.

Limitations

The GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship program was conducted in three separate universities with matching regional training providers. Whilst there is a strong indication that the results of this research indicate a support for this program, this needs to be tested in more locations. A significant factor in the success of this program was the active involvement from university departments of general practice and regional training providers. GP preceptors were handpicked to provide quality exposure and this process would get progressively difficult as numbers for this program are expanded. There is a further issue that most of the candidates that applied to this scholarship program self selected and may have had a bias towards general practice. Even though this is not substantiated within the survey results, future expansion of this program should take this into consideration.

Format of the Scholarships

There was a choice of two different experiences for interested students;

- A Clinical General Practice Placement which involved a Clinical General Practitioner (CGP) providing both instruction and guidance to a medical student in a fully functional medical practice (Clinical Scholarship).
- As an adjunct to their clinical placements, students were also offered an opportunity to undertake a research project under an Academic General Practitioner (AGP) through an Academic General Practice Placement (Academic Scholarship).
- Below is an overview of how the above options were taken up the scholarship recipients:
- A Total of 5 students opted to undertake an Academic Scholarship. Academic scholars completed four supervised clinical placements in General Practice, of three and a half hours duration each, as well as a dedicated research project which took place over two months from January to February 2009. The Academic Scholarship was only offered at the University of Western Australia and University of Melbourne.
- A total of 18 students completed the Clinical Scholarship which involved completing six supervised clinical placements in General Practice of three and a half hours duration.
- All 24 students attended a Pre-Placement workshop conducted on 20th September 2008, in Melbourne.
- Of the 24 students who participated in the pilot program, one had still not completed the program due to personal circumstances on the completion date. This student (who commenced the Academic Scholarship) has expressed an interest to continue with the scholarship and will be completing the program in 2009.

Table 1: Scholarship Type by University

University	Clinical Scholarships	Academic Scholarships	Total
University of Melbourne	7	5*	12
University of Western Australia	9	1	10
University of Notre Dame Sydney	2	n/a	2
Total	18	6*	24*

Note: figure shown in Table 1 are actual numbers (not percentages);
*One of these students has not yet completed their scholarship

Research Methodology

The research was conducted via an online survey and carried out by GPRA. Students were emailed a link to the survey upon GPRA/GPSN Management receiving their final reporting for their scholarship placement.

All 23 students who completed the scholarship program were invited to the survey and all 23 completed the survey, thus a census was achieved. Given the small sample size however, the results should be interpreted with caution and treated as indicative only.

An independent qualitative research was also conducted as part of this scholarship by one of the students in the academic stream. The results, methodology and report on this qualitative study is attached in Appendix A.

Demographics

Most of the students taking part in the pilot of the GPSN Schwartz First Wave program were female (78%); this is partly reflective of the higher proportion of females studying medicine in Australian Universities.

Apart from the skew towards females, a relatively diverse group of students, demographically, took part in the pilot of the program; the pilot included both postgraduate and undergraduate students, a mix of Australian born and overseas born students, as well as students who did and did not have a doctor in their immediate family. Most of the students were single which again reflects the gen Y demographic of the cohort of 1st and 2nd year medical students.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Scholars

Gender		Qualifications	
Male	5	Post Graduate	13
Female	18	Under Graduate	10
Place of Birth		Marital Status	
Australian Born	14	Single	18
Overseas Born	9	Partnered	4
Permanent Residents	5	Partnered w/ children	1
Dependant Visa	1		
Temporary Resident	1		
Australian Citizen	2		
Doctor in Immediate Family			
No	14		
Yes	9		
GP	4		
Psychiatrists	2		
Other	3		

Note: figure shown in Table 2 are actual numbers (not percentages)

Detailed Findings

This section of the report presents the detailed findings from the survey conducted with students who took part in the pilot of the First Wave Scholarship program. Unless otherwise indicated, the results are based on the responses of all students, that is, they are based on the responses of both Academic and Clinical Scholarship students.

Table 3: Overall Experience with the First Wave Program

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
Improved my understanding of the General Practice Training Program	39.1% (9)	43.5% (10)	8.7% (2)	8.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.87	23
Improved my understanding of the role of General Practice in Australia's health system	56.5% (13)	39.1% (9)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.52	23
Improved my understanding of the role of General Practice specialty	56.5% (13)	39.1% (9)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.52	23
Improved my understanding of the various opportunities available through General Practice specialty	39.1% (9)	56.5% (13)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.70	23
Improved my understanding of the remuneration in General Practice	13.0% (3)	56.5% (13)	13.0% (3)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	17.4% (4)	2.35	23
Improved my appreciation for General Practice as a specialty choice of vocation	39.1% (9)	56.5% (13)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.65	23
I found the GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship Program extremely beneficial	78.3% (18)	21.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.22	23
I would recommend the Program to other students	82.6% (19)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.17	23

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements with regards to your experience with the GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship

The results from the survey suggest that the GPSN Schwartz First Wave Program is, overall, definitely meeting its objective of providing medical students with an early positive experience in General Practice.

When asked about their overall experience with the First Wave Program, students were overwhelmingly positive; all either agreed or strongly agreed that they found the program 'extremely beneficial' and that they would recommend the Program to other students. Further, all but one felt that the program has helped them appreciate General Practice as a specialty choice of vocation.

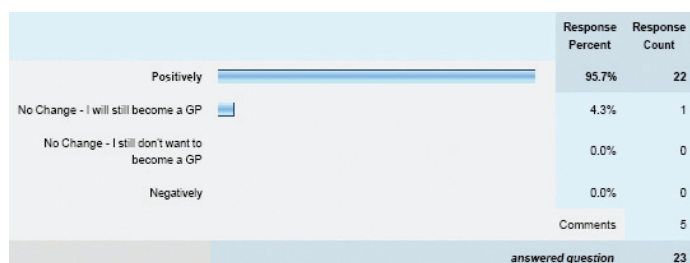
The program appears to be doing a great job in terms of improving students' understanding of General Practice in a number of areas; with the exception of one respondent, all agreed that the program improved their understanding of the role of General Practice in our health system, the scope of the General Practice specialty, as well as the various opportunities available through the General Practice specialty (all with 96% agreement).

Whilst most agreed that the program improved their understanding of the General Practice training program (83%), there were four students who did not agree with this which suggests this is an area for improvement. Another area to be earmarked for improvement looks to be information regarding the remuneration in General Practice; as high as seven of the First Wave scholars (30%) did not come away from the program having a better understanding of the remuneration in General Practice.

Below are some individual comments from the students with regards to their overall experience with the program:

- Overall one of the best experiences and a major highlight of my life career-wise so far.
- An interesting and thought provoking program, I definitely am thankful I did it!!
- While I gained a lot of experience throughout the placement, I found the GP to be very unenthusiastic about his profession.. this seemed to contradict the goals of the program. I think a much more enthusiastic / positive GP would be much more inspiring for future scholarship participants.

Chart 1: Impact on Ambitions Towards a Career in General Practice



Q. How has the GPSN Schwartz First Wave Program impacted on your ambitions to a career in General Practice?

- All but one student stated that their experience with the program has positively impacted their ambitions towards a career in General Practice - a very positive result for the pilot program. The remaining student has indicated that they have

already decided to become a GP and the scholarship program did not change that perception.

Some of the verbatim comments provided by students below provide some further insight into this result - they indicate that many taking part in the pilot had a previous interest in General Practice and that their participation in the pilot has encouraged them to more strongly consider a career in General Practice;

I was already interested in GP but this confirmed that it's the direction I want to head.

- I was half throwing away the idea of being a GP before the program, but now it is a massive choice for me and one that I am likely to pick
- There was no change for me, I have always been interested in general practice and still am, but I think someone who was not so interested in General Practice may have been put off by a GP that was so negative about his job
- It helped me to see that I would enjoy the work and I could perform adequately with the right training
- I've been further encouraged to pursue my dream of becoming a GP

Main Factors That Have Influenced Choice

Q. Please list two main factors that have influenced the above choice

Students were asked why their First Wave placement experience positively influenced their ambitions towards a General Practice career; their answers in their own words are provided below;

- Experiencing the variety of cases, I never appreciated the wide range of skills of a GP
- The GP helped me appreciate the job satisfaction of a GP in caring for the community
- Patient contact
- Variety of cases seen in GP
- Great preceptor
- Increased knowledge of General Practice
- Variety from day to day
- Important role you play in a whole family's life
- I understand the different roles they can have
- Portability of specialty into rural areas
- More varied career choice than previously thought
- Flexibility to somewhat specialise
- Women as GPs with their work/life balance
- Challenges as GP
- Being able to witness the variety in general practice
- GPs play an important role in finding disease in early stages
- Variety of work
- Opportunities for specialisation within General Practice
- Flexibility of work hours
- Large amount of patient contact
- Interesting caseload

- Work-life balance
- Realised the true flexibility in the job
- Scope for specialisation in fields of interest even after becoming a GP
- Education about GP and what it involves
- Practical experience of GP
- The chance to have an excellent work-life balance
- Various opportunities to follow areas of interest after becoming a GP
- If the GP had been more encouraging and positive perhaps it would have positively impacted me
- Luckily I have always had an interest in GP and am still interested
- I was exposed to the scope/variety of General Practice
- Realised that General Practice allows for a good work/family balance

- Meeting so many patients who were openly delighted with their GP
- The range of clinical skills needed to perform well
- Diversity of patients and conditions
- Continuity of care of patients
- Relationship with patients
- Range of medicine encountered
- The interesting nature of work that comes with General Practice
- The enthusiasm, kindness and competence of my GP preceptor and other supervisors
- Better understanding of the challenge of diagnosis
- Appreciation of the social role of the GP
- Lifestyle as a GP
- Working environment

Table 4: Preferred Choice of Specialty

	Not a preferred choice	1	2	3	4	5	Response Count
General Practice	0.0% (0)	39.1% (9)	39.1% (9)	8.7% (2)	8.7% (2)	4.3% (1)	23
Emergency	56.5% (13)	13.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	17.4% (4)	8.7% (2)	4.3% (1)	23
Paediatrics	34.8% (8)	13.0% (3)	17.4% (4)	8.7% (2)	8.7% (2)	17.4% (4)	23
Radiology	87.0% (20)	0.0% (0)	8.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	23
Hospital Medicine	47.8% (11)	13.0% (3)	4.3% (1)	13.0% (3)	17.4% (4)	4.3% (1)	23
Surgery	39.1% (9)	13.0% (3)	8.7% (2)	8.7% (2)	4.3% (1)	26.1% (6)	23
Research	78.3% (18)	0.0% (0)	8.7% (2)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	23
Psychiatry	60.9% (14)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	8.7% (2)	17.4% (4)	23
Anaesthetics	65.2% (15)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	17.4% (4)	4.3% (1)	23
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	47.8% (11)	8.7% (2)	17.4% (4)	26.1% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	23
Unsure	65.2% (15)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.7% (2)	8.7% (2)	23

Q. List from 1 to 5 your preferred career choice. If specialty is not one of your top 5, select 'not a preferred choice'.

Amongst the First Wave scholars, General Practice is definitely the most preferred choice of specialty. When asked to indicate, for each medical specialty, whether it is one of their top five preferred choices, General Practice was the first or second choice for 18 of the 23 students (78%). It should be noted that the sample group may have been skewed towards General Practice to begin with since at the time of applying for the scholarship they were aware that it was related to General Practice placements.

The next most popular specialties were Paediatrics (7 respondents rating it in their top two) and Obstetrics & Gynaecology (with 6 respondents rating it in their top two) - specialties that are very closely related to, and often practiced in, General Practice. These preferences reflect the predominantly female sample. Also of note is the fairly high proportion of students (17%) who indicated that they are unsure of their first choice at this stage.

Chart 2: Perceptions That They Will Change Choice of Specialty Before Graduating

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	34.8%	8
No	13.0%	3
Probably	34.8%	8
Probably Not	8.7%	2
Not sure	8.7%	2
answered question		23

Q. Do you think you will change your choice before graduating?

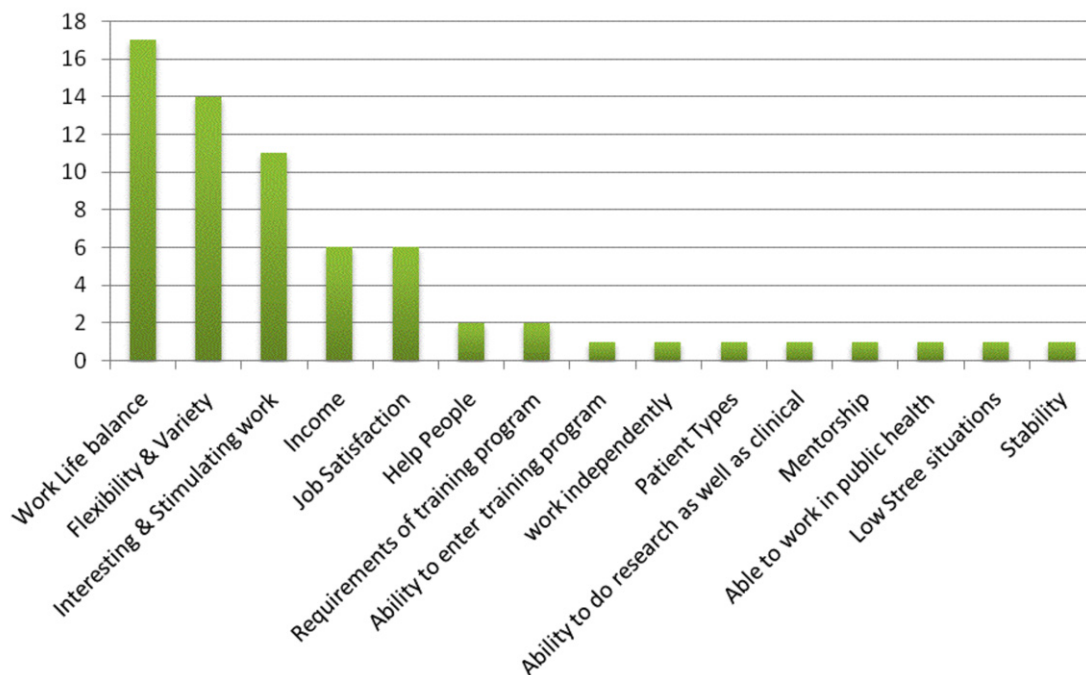
Whilst for now respondents are keen on General Practice as either their first or second career choice, most respondents (16 of the 23 respondents, 70%) indicated they will or are likely to change their career choice of specialty before graduating.

When asked to state in their own words the most important factors they consider when making a career choice decision, those related to work life balance were the most popular - again, this is likely a reflection of the predominantly female sample; anecdotal evidence suggests that the increased demand for a balanced lifestyle amongst GPs is driven by the 'feminisation' of the GP workforce.

Factors related to flexibility and variety in one's work, as well as work that is interesting and stimulating, were also important considerations. Interestingly, income and factors related to 'helping people' were mentioned considerably less.

Chart 3: Important Factors When Considering Choice of Specialty

■ Important Factors when considering Choice of specialty



Q. Please list the three most important factors you consider when making a career choice decision (open-ended question)

Table 5: Importance of Factors When Making a Choice of Specialty

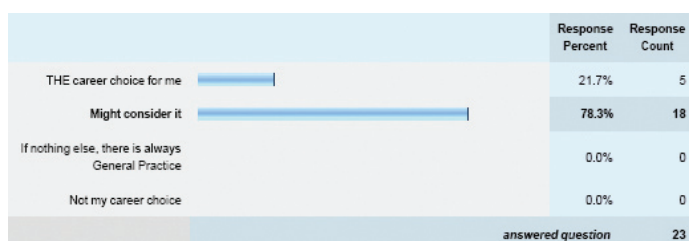
	Extremely Important	Important	Doesn't Matter Much	Not Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Opportunity to work overseas	34.8% (8)	47.8% (11)	13.0% (3)	4.3% (1)	1.87	23
Opportunity to work rural	21.7% (5)	30.4% (7)	39.1% (9)	8.7% (2)	2.35	23
Prestige of specialty	4.3% (1)	17.4% (4)	56.5% (13)	21.7% (5)	2.96	23
Workforce shortage	8.7% (2)	30.4% (7)	47.8% (11)	13.0% (3)	2.65	23
Making a real difference	52.2% (12)	43.5% (10)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.52	23
High Income	4.3% (1)	56.5% (13)	39.1% (9)	0.0% (0)	2.35	23
Flexible hours	39.1% (9)	56.5% (13)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.65	23
Variety in a work day	69.6% (16)	30.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.30	23
Wok-life balance	69.6% (16)	30.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.30	23
Career Advancement	26.1% (6)	60.9% (14)	13.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	1.87	23

Q. Please rate how important each of the following factors are to you when making a career choice decision...

When asked to indicate how important a range of factors were in making a career choice decision, variety in one's work and work-life balance were rated the highest, with all First Wave scholars rating them as either 'extremely important' or 'important'.

'Making a real difference' and flexible hours both rated highly (both 96% extremely important/important) as did career advancement (87%). Conversely, a high income (61%) and prestige (22%) were considerably less important. In all, these results are consistent with the values thought to be associated with the so called 'y generation' as described by social commentators in the media in the last few years.

Chart 4: General Practice as a Career Choice



Q. How do you regard General Practice as a career choice?

When asked to indicate how they regard General Practice as a career choice, none of the First Wave Scholars saw General Practice as a last resort - this further supports the view that those students who are being attracted to FirstWave have a fairly positive view of General Practice prior to entering the program. More than three-quarters (78%) are considering General Practice

as a career choice, with the remaining (22%) having decided on General Practice as their career path.

General Practice Students Network (GPSN)

The First Wave scholars were asked a few questions about GPSN to gauge basic awareness of the organisation, whether they were members and whether they'd like to get involved in the future.

Table 6: General Practice Students Network

Have heard About GPSN prior to FW			Are a GPSN member		
Yes	18	78%	Yes	13	57%
No	4	17%	No	10	43%
Unsure	1	4%			
Aware about GPSN's aims			Would like to be involved with GPSN		
Yes	4	17%	Yes	14	61%
No	19	83%	No	1	4%
			Maybe	8	35%

Q. Have you heard of the General Practice Students Network (GPSN) at your University?

Q. Are you a member of the General Practice Students Network?

Q. [Description of GPSN and its aims provided to student] Were you aware of this prior to your selection to the GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship Program?

Q. Do you think you will get involved with GPSN in the future?

Whilst most First Wave Scholars had heard about GPSN (78%), only around half were members (57%) and only a small proportion (17%) were fully aware of what GPSN is about

and what it aims to achieve, prior to entering the First Wave Scholarship program (17%). These results suggest that GPSN still has some way to go in achieving blanket awareness of its aims and objectives amongst student bodies.

Most promising is that more than half of the students (61%) indicated wanting to get involved with GPSN in the future, having now been made aware of its objectives, with most others (35%) saying they may want to get involved - this is another indicator of the success of the First Wave program.

Table 7: Experience with the First Wave Scholarship Program

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
The application process was fairly challenging	4.3% (1)	39.1% (9)	26.1% (6)	30.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.83	23
The location of my placement medical centre was convenient	27.7% (5)	39.1% (9)	13.0% (3)	8.7% (2)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	2.61	23
Organising initial meetings with my clinical advisor/or academic supervisor was convenient	26.1% (6)	52.2% (12)	17.4% (4)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.00	23
Organising my scholarship placement sessions with my supervisor and ensuring I had a learning plan that worked for me was convenient	30.4% (7)	52.2% (12)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.87	23
GPRA/GPSN management provided ample support throughout my placement	26.1% (6)	56.5% (13)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	17.4% (4)	1.91	23
My University Faculty provided ample support throughout my placement	8.7% (2)	8.7% (2)	60.9% (14)	21.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.96	23
The Regional Training Provider WAGPET, VMA, SIGPET) provided ample support throughout my placement	8.7% (2)	34.8% (8)	34.8% (8)	17.4% (4)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.74	23

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following aspects with regards to your GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship placement...

When asked to rate a range of aspects relating to the logistics and set-up of their First Wave Scholarship placement, the results indicate that whilst things are on the right track, there are some areas that will require fine tuning when implementing the first 'real' program in 2009.

Organising initial meetings with their clinical and/or academic supervisor and organizing their scholarship placement sessions with their supervisor did not cause much concern for students, with the majority agreeing that these activities were convenient for them to do (78% and 83% strongly agree/agree respectively).

Areas that look to have caused some issues were with regards to the application process and the location of student placements; almost half of the students agreed that the application process was 'fairly challenging' (43%) - of note is that all of the academic scholarship students (five out of five) found the application process challenging. Further, less than two-thirds of all students (61%) agreed that the location of their placement medical centre was convenient.

The kind of support students receive from the various bodies involved may also require some review.

Less than half of the students agreed (43%) that they received ample support from their RTP throughout their placement - the results were more positive amongst Clinical versus Academic Scholarship students however (50% agreement amongst Clinical students versus 20% (i.e. 1 of 5) agreement amongst Academic students).

With regards to receiving 'ample' support from their University Faculty, agreement was as low as 17% amongst all students. It should be noted however that Academic scholars would be spending more time with their faculty than would Clinical scholars, given that they complete a research project through their University faculty; amongst Academic students the results were slightly more positive - with two of five (40%) strongly agreeing that they received good support and the remaining three saying they neither agreed nor disagreed with this; the majority of Clinical students in comparison (11 of 18, 61%) felt ambivalent about this.

Most of the students (83%) felt that they were well supported by GPRA/GPSN Management.

Given the program was being piloted for the first time, it is probably not surprising that GPRA/GPSN Management were perhaps providing the most support and guidance. However, how well the University Faculties and RTPs support First Wave scholars in the future should be monitored. GPRA/GPSN Management will also need to ensure that the faculties and RTPs are aware of their roles and responsibilities in supporting First Wave placements.

The following are some verbatim comments provided by students in relation to their placement experience:

- GPSNSFWS organised everything, except the actual timing of the clinical sessions, etc. So there was no input from my Faculty or from the RTP.
- Wagpet workshop was great
- My placement was really too far - it was around an hours drive from my house. This impacted on the ease in which I could attend placements, when I could do them, and how much future contact I will have with my clinical preceptor
- I did not have a RTP
- Even though the placement I was assigned to was difficult to get to, I had the most enjoyable learning experience. I do not regret spending the hours to get to and from the clinic at all.

Table 8: Experience with Clinical Placements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
Developed an appreciation for General Practice and the role it plays in the long-term healthcare of the patient.	65.2% (15)	30.4% (7)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.43	23
Gained an understanding of lifestyle and work-life balance opportunities in General Practice	52.2% (12)	47.8% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.48	23
Was exposed to the various career options within General Practice and the diverse range of medicine that can be practised	39.1% (9)	47.8% (11)	4.3% (1)	8.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.83	23
Understood the continuity of care concept that makes General Practice unique among specialties	60.9% (14)	30.4% (7)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.52	23
Observed a number of General Practice consultations and learn clinical skills	56.5% (13)	43.5% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.43	23
Took part in General Practice preventative healthcare such as care plans and health checks.	43.5% (10)	39.1% (9)	0.0% (0)	17.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.91	23
Gained an understanding of history taking and examination in General Practice	47.8% (11)	39.1% (9)	8.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (1)	1.78	23
Received encouragement to undertake simple tasks under supervision such as blood pressure measurement and immunisation	43.5% (10)	21.7% (5)	21.7% (5)	13.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.04	23
Took part in a variety of community activities that complement the activities of the GP	8.7% (2)	26.1% (6)	39.1% (9)	21.7% (5)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.87	23
Attended a Basic Training Workshop run by the local RTP (optional)	26.1% (6)	8.7% (2)	26.1% (6)	26.1% (6)	13.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.91	23

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree your GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship CLINICAL PLACEMENT provided you with each of the following opportunities...

Students were asked about various aspects with regards to their clinical placement.

The feedback suggests that the pilot of the First Wave program successfully exposed students to the core fundamentals and strengths of the General Practice specialty - just about all students came away with an understanding of the role General Practice plays in the long-term health care of patients (96%) and the continuity of care concept that makes General Practice unique (91%).

Most clinical placements were also successful in imparting information on lifestyle and work-balance opportunities in General Practice to the students (100% strongly agree/agree) as well as the various career options and the diverse range of medicine that can be practiced in the specialty (87%).

When it came to the more hands-on opportunities the clinical placements offered, the results were slightly less positive. Whilst all agreed that they got the chance to observe a number of GP consultations and learn clinical skills, and most gained an understanding of history taking and examination (87%), there were a group of students who did not get to take part in GP preventative health care activities (17%) or in simple tasks such as taking blood pressure measurements and immunization (35%).

Ensuring that all placements offer some hands-on opportunities should be noted for future waves of the program.

More focus may also be given to the more peripheral learnings offered during clinical placements; only around a third of the students took part in community activities that complement GP activities (35%) and the same proportion attended a Basic Training Workshop run by the local RTP - Academic scholarship students were particularly unlikely to take part in these activities; only two took part in any community activities and only one attended a local RTP workshop.

The following are some additional comments provided by students in relation to their clinical placement:

- Overall one of the best experiences and a major highlight of my life career-wise so far.
- An interesting and thought provoking program, I definitely am thankful I did it!!
- While I gained a lot of experience throughout the placement, I found the GP to be very unenthusiastic about his profession. This seemed to contradict the goals of the program. I think a much more enthusiastic/positive GP would be much more inspiring for future scholarship participants.

How Time Was Spent During the Placements

Students were asked how they would split the time they spent across each of the people that were involved in their placement. The results for Academic and Clinical Scholarship students are provided separately in the tables below.

Table 9: Academic Scholarship Students

	100%	75%	50%	25%	0%	Rating Average	Response Count
Your Clinical Placement Supervisors	20.0% (1)	40.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	40.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.60	5
Your Academic Placement Supervisor	20.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	80.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	3.4	5
Practice Nurse	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	80.0% (4)	20.0% (1)	4.2	5
Local/Other General Practitioners	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	80.0% (4)	20.0% (1)	4.2	5
Medical Educators	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	80.0% (4)	4.2	5
Other Health Professionals/ Specialists	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (5)	5.00	5
Additional Professional Networks	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	80.0% (4)	4.80	5
Regional Training Provider Staff	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	80.0% (4)	4.80	5

Q. During your GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship placement, what proportion of your time did you spend interacting with each of the following people? Base: n=5 respondents.

It should be noted that one Academic student calculated their academic and clinical placements separately in answering this question.

Table 10: Clinical Scholarship Students

	100%	75%	50%	25%	0%	Rating Average	Response Count
Your Clinical Placement Supervisors	11.1% (2)	38.9% (7)	16.7% (3)	33.3% (6)	0.0% (0)	2.72	18
Your Academic Placement Supervisor	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (18)	5.00	18
Practice Nurse	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.6% (1)	61.1% (11)	33.3% (6)	4.28	18
Local/Other General Practitioners	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (2)	55.6% (10)	33.3% (6)	4.222	18
Medical Educators	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (3)	83.3% (15)	4.83	18
Other Health Professionals/ Specialists	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.6% (1)	22.2% (4)	72.2% (13)	4.67	18
Additional Professional Networks	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.6% (1)	0.0% (0)	34.4% (17)	4.89	18
Regional Training Provider Staff	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.6% (1)	34.4% (17)	4.94	18

Q. During your GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship placement, what proportion of your time did you spend interacting with each of the following people? Base: n=18 respondents

Amongst Clinical placement students, if they didn't spend all their time with their clinical placement supervisor, they spent three-quarters of their time with their clinical placement supervisor and the other quarter with either a practice nurse or another GP; thus perhaps when their GP preceptor was not able to supervise, students were still left in the hands of those who could still supervise and/or teach General Practice skills.

Table 11: Frequency of Exposure to Range of Services During First Wave Scholarship

	Never	Once	More than once	Rating Average	Response Count
Hospital Interactions	69.6% (16)	17.4% (4)	13.0% (3)	1.43	23
Aged Care	17.4% (4)	21.7% (5)	60.9% (14)	2.43	23
Allied Health Services	26.1% (6)	17.4% (4)	56.5% (13)	2.30	23
Community Health Initiatives	47.8% (11)	26.1% (6)	26.1% (6)	1.78	23
Preventative Medical Services	13.0% (3)	34.8% (8)	52.2% (12)	2.39	23
Aboriginal Medical Services	91.3% (21)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)	1.13	23
Pharmacy	65.2% (15)	8.7% (2)	26.1% (6)	1.61	23
Pathology	26.1% (6)	17.4% (4)	56.5% (13)	2.30	23

Q. Please indicate how often you were exposed to each of the following services during your GPSN Schwartz First Wave Scholarship placement.

The First Wave scholarship program placements appear to be doing a good job with regards to exposing students to the broad range of services General Practitioners work with.

More than half of all the pilot placements were exposed to Aged Care more than once (61%), Allied Health Services (57%), Pathology (57%) and/or Preventative Health Initiatives (52%) more than once - probably the most commonly used GP services. Other related services were experienced less often, most notably Aboriginal Medical Services for which just two students experienced some exposure to and Hospital Experiences for which just a third (30%) experienced.

Given that students complete either four or six clinical sessions, of three and a half hours duration each, it is perhaps not surprising that not all students were exposed to all services during their placements. In implementing the next wave of the program, there may be a need to review whether this be made a requirement or not and accommodated accordingly. Exposure to services may also be a function of the nature of the student's placement medical practice.

One student provided the following additional comment with regards to services;

- I experienced a broad range of services, plus my placement had a pathology lab next door which was very good for my education!

Areas for Improvement

Whilst feedback from the students completing the pilot program indicated that all students had a very positive experience, some areas for improvement for future waves of the program were identified in the survey results:

- The program needs to ensure that placements provide the information students require on the General Practice training program - as it appears that in some cases this was lacking; some students also required more information on the remuneration in General Practice than was provided.

- Some of the verbatim comments provided by students indicated that in at least one case, the GP preceptor was not enthusiastic about their career and profession - ensuring that GP Preceptors are carefully recruited in future will be vital to ensuring that students are placed with an encouraging supervisor for obvious reasons.
- Some of the logistical aspects of the scholarship program may need to be fine-tuned to make it a bit more convenient and easy for students to do, namely making the application process a bit simpler and reviewing some of the location of placements where possible.
- The type and level of support that University Faculties and RTPs will be required to provide the students may require some review, as most students did not feel well supported by these resources, despite a positive experience with the program.

From a big picture perspective, a challenge will be to attract medical students that are not already considering General Practice as a career choice to the First Wave Scholarship program - it appears that at this stage, most being attracted to the program already have an initial interest. Enticing a broad range of medical students to the program will be important in bringing more students into the General Practice fold.

Experiences of Medical Students' undertaking the pilot General Practice Students' Network Schwartz First Wave Scholarship: a phenomenological study

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of the General Practice Students Network (GPSN) Schwartz First Wave Scholarship recipients during their participation in the program.

Background

The Australian health system is under pressure. An ageing population with a growing burden of chronic diseases, combined with a diminishing supply of general practitioners means that there will be an even larger mismatch of demand and supply in the primary health care sector¹. However, this is not a phenomenon localised to the GP specialty; it is a worrying trend across the entire medical workforce².

Australia's health workforce shortage is both absolute and relative: there are not enough medical graduates and these graduates are not going to the areas of greatest need². Indeed, the numbers of registrars in general practice training decreased from around 1900 in 1994 to just over 1400 in 2002³. This number of freshly graduated general practitioners is inadequate to replace the 40% of the current GP workforce aged 50 years or older¹. This mismatch has been attributed to factors such as: a perceived lack of income, reports of low morale and general practice having less intellectual stimulation relative to other specialties^{4,5}. There have been a number of proposed solutions to this issue, such as the postgraduate general practice placement program (PGPPP) and rural undergraduate steering committee program (RUSC)⁶.

The timing and mechanism of how medical students make their career decisions is relevant to interventions aimed at increasing general practice intake. Some students entering medical school have a strong idea of their ideal career path, often formed by personal experiences or role models or from the media⁷. These preferences often precede the students' knowledge of other potential medical specialties, and can vary greatly throughout medical school in response to outside influences⁶⁻⁸. There is evidence that an early positive general practice exposure combined with a constant general practice presence throughout medical school is a strong indicator of a subsequent career in general practice^{8,9}. However, neither the PGPPP, RUSC or any other initiatives provides this⁶. To fill this space, the General Practice Student Network (GPSN) has set up a scholarship, the GPSN First Wave Schwartz Scholarship.

The GPSN First Wave scholarship is open to medical students Australia-wide in years one or two. Students were invited to apply via a written application, and from this 24 participants were chosen. Students were funded to attend a one day workshop in Melbourne which focused on the process of pursuing a career in general practice and correcting any unfounded preconceptions of general practice the students may have.

Students were assigned to either a four or six session placement [depending on whether they were on an academic or clinical scholarship respectively] with one of their local general practitioners and given a \$500 stipend. Some scholars were also given the opportunity to undertake a research project on an academic scholarship or attend workshops organised by their regional training provider. In this way, students gained a theoretical and practical understanding of what life as a general practitioner involves. This phenomenological study will explicate the experiences of the GPSN First Wave scholars throughout this pilot program and assess whether the program was effective in altering the scholars' perceptions towards general practice.

Methodology

A phenomenological approach was used in this study. The central goal of phenomenology is to describe life experiences or to seek to understand the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by people¹⁰⁻¹³. With regards to this study, this will allow us to understand whether the GPSN First Wave scholars understand the general practice specialty in a more informed manner as a result of their participation in this program. The study was undertaken from an empirical, transcendental phenomenology perspective¹⁴.

Ethical Consideration/Informed Consent

The subjects were informed of the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary. Verbal consent was obtained at the time of the interview.

Participants

The study population consisted of 10 first wave scholars, of which 4 were from the University of Western Australia (UWA) and University of Melbourne (UM) respectively. The remaining two individuals were from the University of Notre Dame in Sydney (UNDS). The four from UM and UWA were randomly selected from their corresponding cohorts of 11. The two individuals from UNDS were the only participants from that university.

Of the study population of 10, 2 persons were unreachable and one person refused consent. All individuals who were approached had completed the GPSN First Wave scholarship program successfully.

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted over the telephone, with the conversations held in a semi-structured manner. Whenever possible, the interview was carried out in an unstructured manner but due to the large time period between data collection and date of the GPSN First Wave workshop [approximately 6 months] some prompting was necessary to obtain useful data. The interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview. All the interviews were carried out in private and subjects were assured of the confidentiality of their answers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the verbatim transcription of the interviews. Data was analysed continuously throughout the study, with transcripts read in entirety to aid in obtaining a complete meaning from the experience^{13,14}. Data was delineated for units of meaning, and then combined to form themes and sub-themes¹⁴. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, these themes were continuously re-evaluated with the addition of new data¹⁴.

I myself am a recipient of a GPSN First Wave academic scholarship myself; thus significant effort was put into bracketing my thoughts to avoid my interpretations and concepts contaminating the interview. My opinion of the program was that it was an excellent initiative, and I believe it was successful in altering students' perceptions of general practice. However I also consider that there should be more communication between the assigned clinical placement and GPSN First Wave Scholarship Staff to facilitate a better learning environment for students. I avoided letting my experiences with the program influence my interpretations and my personal connections with students influence my analysis. This was achieved by my effort to try and extract meaning from the interviews objectively, not letting my experiences influence my perception. Furthermore, I consciously thought of situations where these factors may confound the interview results and attempted to avoid or minimise their impact.

Limitations of Study

Recall bias is likely to be a significant confounder in this research, as a relatively long time has elapsed between the workshop and the date of this survey. Hence results from this survey may not be indicative of the true value of the GPSN First Wave scholarship. Also, ideally the number of participants would have been greater. Having seven respondents does not allow for a full spectrum of experiences to be accounted for; however it is still a reasonable number and as such this study can be considered a reasonably good indicator of the GPSN First Wave scholarship qualities.

Findings and Discussion

GPSN First Wave Workshop Experience

The Workshop was the first temporally placed event in the GPSN First Wave scholarship program; it was followed by the placements, research projects and regional workshop [if applicable]. All of the participants of the First Wave scholarship attended the same workshop and had the opportunity to meet each other. At the workshop, a variety of speakers attended discussing issues ranging from their typical day to running the businesses side of a general practitioners clinic to debunking myths regarding general practice. There were a range of speakers at the workshop; most of them registered general practitioners in various stages of their career. Attendees commented that they enjoyed this variety, with one scholar summarizing:

"I really enjoyed the variety in terms of like speakers and their backgrounds and their content."

The content seemed appropriate for the audience, as the majority of them commented on how well thought out the presentations were. In addition, participants commented on the group settings:

"It was a good opportunity to meet other students who have the same level of practice in general practice... a good way to kick off the project and get a sense of being part of the group, cohort, and being involved"

With another student stating:

"I was really glad we had everyone from all the different states together"

This sort of peer mentoring has been associated with increased connectedness, larger changes in knowledge and a possible increase in recruitment¹⁵. Given the small number of scholarship recipients, in future years this aspect of the pilot program could easily be expanded on. This wish is illustrated by another participant:

"It would have been nice to have some bigger breaks so we could all talk together"

If the program is to be altered next year with a longer term component in mind, such relationships between scholars become increasingly important¹⁵.

However one scholar who was interviewed believed the content could be altered slightly:

"I liked the trip, but the workshop didn't really seem that useful. I was hoping to learn a bit more clinical skills and something more applicable to the scholarship - not just experiences"

This suggests that they were hoping to achieve something different from the workshop - given the difficulty of teaching clinical skills in a setting such as this one, this may prove fruitless. However, it could be a sign that there was too much of an emphasis on guest speakers.

Interestingly, most attendees did not cite that the workshop made them more likely to consider a career in general practice - as they were already "pretty keen". It seemed to have more of a reinforcing effect. When initiatives such as this one are applied to students who are considering or have decided on the same specialty, they will be much less likely to change their minds in the future^{16,17}. If the same program is delivered to a person who is initially unwilling to change specialties to general practice, there is a much smaller chance it will have an effect^{16,17}. Hence the recipients of the scholarship should be carefully chosen to ensure the maximal benefit is gained from the program.

The predominant feedback from the workshop was that it was very enjoyable, the speakers were interesting and they seemed prepared for their speeches. However, given the number of requests for more breaks and networking time, this should be considered due to the benefits derivable from this.

Clinical Placements

This was the part of the program with the greatest amount of variability in response.

Students who have positive clinical placements and a good experience are more likely to choose general practice as a career^{18,19}. Indeed, this holds true even if they were not involved in the specialty beforehand²⁰. Out of the seven GPSN First Wave scholars interviewed, three disliked their assigned general practitioner. One such reason was:

"I only spent one morning session with him and he spoke with an Irish accent. But he spoke really fast and quickly. By the time I heard and interpreted what he said, I seemed slow so I thought it'd be quicker just to say I don't know"

This participant spent her placements with the practice manager and nurses as opposed to her assigned general practitioner. In this sort of situation, there is no possibility of forming a mentoring relationship with the assigned preceptor. Early experiences with a specialty, whether positive or negative, tend to have a lasting effect². Consequently, general practitioners should be chosen with great care, particularly in the case of a scholarship program such as this.

Another student also had a negative experience with their general practitioner:

"I didn't like my placement guy. I found my GP wasn't very enthusiastic at all... I got the feeling that he wasn't really keen, not only to have

me there but he also wasn't very enthusiastic about being a GP either...I felt like he was kind of trying to talk me out of it in a way"

This student sounded dejected with their placement experience and wanted to ensure preceptors were chosen more stringently next year. However, there were a few positive experiences:

"The GPs I was with had a good rapport with their families and knew what they were doing at school and what the kids were doing...seemed cool"

A positive mentoring relationship in this context can lead to an increased interest in general practice, a feeling of increased connectedness to the field of general practice and the formation of potentially career-enhancing relationships¹⁵. More tellingly, in a study by the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, GP registrars rated their GP experience as a student as more important than role models as a factor in career choice⁹. The importance of this part of the scholarship cannot be underestimated, particularly since the students who did enjoy their placement (and some who didn't) all commented that their placements were more influential on their impressions of general practice than the workshops were:

"I thought the workshop was, like it had its value, but I think the placements themselves were a lot more valuable and I got a lot more out of the placements than I did the workshops."

Placement objectives

All of the students who were satisfied with their preceptor felt content with their achievements in the placement. They felt a lot more comfortable with the work expected of a general practitioner:

"I did enjoy seeing the cases; there was a lot of lifestyle stuff, people dealing with terminal illness, with illness and everyday life and social life... I really enjoyed seeing the first point of call and you get a lot of strange and unusual things coming up"

Just under half of the participants seemed to have erroneous perceptions regarding what they could expect on their placement, with two students also commenting that they wanted to do more clinical work but were not given the opportunity:

"I achieved a lot but I was a bit unsure of what it would be like before I went into the placement... I still think I achieved many of the things I wanted to achieve but maybe my perceptions were a bit misguided before I had any experience in the program"

There seemed to be some confusion both within the student and preceptor population as to the roles of the GPSN First Wave scholars. Notably, all the students who had negative impressions of their general practitioners also were unhappy with their placement.

Perceptions of General Practice

Given the typically negative media portrayal of general practitioners and the finding that the media has a large influence on the perceptions of younger medical students towards specialties⁷, it is no surprise that almost all of the participants had some negative opinions regarding general practice before commencing the program. One participant commented:

"It's not very well paid... doesn't have the same status as other medical professions... my peer group views that general practice isn't very challenging"

However, her attitude after the conclusion of the program changed to:

"I'm still pretty excited about it and I think they [my peers] don't really know anything about it... good to be in a GP clinic and the kind of work they do that I would potentially enjoy and it doesn't matter what other people think."

This is a common reason for students losing interest: 'badmouthing' by students and specialists [negative attitudes] towards general practice has been documented to cause other students to lose interest in general practice⁹. There is a tendency for hospital consultants to perpetuate negative stereotypes of general practice, and is a worldwide phenomenon⁹.

Another student described a prevalent perception of general practice as:

"the perception of it as being a second grade one and for someone who couldn't get into the other specialties"

However, as a result of the workshop she realised that:

"...seeing how specialised GPs could be too, I mean they told us you could do diplomas and specialise after that too"

Hence in this case, the workshop was instrumental in showing the scholar that general practitioners can be quite specialised, and it wouldn't be easy to do such a qualification. Indeed, most of the incorrect perceptions amongst the surveyed cohort which were corrected by the workshop were actually public misconceptions; most of the time they weren't held by the participants themselves.

Student Reflections

General Reflections on the Program

Throughout the entire cohort, there was an upbeat reflection on the GPSN First Wave scholarship. The vast majority of students mentioned that the extra clinical exposure was a great feature:

"I'm glad I did it and I've been recommending it to my other friends as well because it gives you a bit more a hands on experience"

In addition, some students interpreted their positive experience in the program as extra confirmation that general practice might be something that they're interested in. The idea of increasing connectedness being desirable across the cohort recurred; with a student saying that:

"It was nice that they kind of kept in contact with us throughout the process."

Although a few students appeared to get substandard placements, this does not appear to have made a major impact on their overall impression of the program as they gave positive feedback for the program. Whether it affected their desire to become a general practitioner is unknown.

Future Links with GPSN

Whether there is long term bonds formed as a result of a students' participation in this program is a measure of its ability to attract students to general practice⁹. Some of the GPSN First Wave scholars had the opportunity to attend a training workshop where they learnt basic skills like suturing and ophthalmoscopy from general practitioners closer to their age group. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with all attendees indicating that if the opportunity existed, they would attend a similar workshop again.

Amongst the First Wave scholars, there is also enthusiasm to keep in touch with their assigned general practitioner. Two of the three students who reported a negative preceptor experience would in fact keep in touch with their preceptor:

"Yea, I'd really like to. Um, he is a great guy"

However, some students were not aware that it could be continued into a long term, mentoring relationship:

"I guess if I had the chance to, I never thought that that was possible"

With the benefits of a long term mentor established, it is clear that First Wave scholars should be explicitly told that they are encouraged to keep in touch with their mentor, as this is one of the largest influences on a medical students' career choice⁹.

Recommendations

The career expectations and factors upon which current medical graduates base their specialisation decision on vary immensely from previous generations². Presently, junior doctors attach a high level of importance to: income expectation, length of training time, working hours, intellectual content of specialty, interest in helping

people, work experience since graduation and the atmosphere/work culture typical of the specialty^{8,9}. General practice is uniquely placed in this list: graduates who choose general practice do so because of the low length of training time, flexible working hours, interesting in helping people and the maintenance of a work and recreational balance^{8,9}. The factors common to both groups, along with the flexibility provided by modular learning via the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, should be emphasised to students².

The increasing number of females entering medicine and the larger proportion of females relative to males entering general practice means they are an important target group for the First Wave scholarship^{1,9}. Furthermore, to obtain the best result from the First Wave scholarship, those who are considering or are keen on general practice should be targeted⁶. This ensures maximum follow-on to a career in general practice^{6,9}. A measure of this may be obtained indirectly through a questionnaire asking applicants to number the importance they attach to the career qualities listed above; those whose career quality preferences score closest to the scores of the general practice population are most suitable⁸.

With regards to the content of the First Wave program, there were no complaints regarding the organisation and activities associated with the scholarship. The primary aim of the program in altering students' perceptions towards general practice seemed to be successfully accomplished, as many students reported having their myths 'busted'. Secondly, the choice of general practitioners should be closely screened as it is an integral part of the program and a large number of participants were unhappy with their

preceptor. Thirdly, the relationship between the student cohort and speakers at the workshop was not allowed to develop fully; this is particularly important if the program is extended past a one year period^{8,15}. The better the students feel connected with each other and their role models, the more likely they are to communicate over the long term and continue into general practice¹⁵. The local GPSN university club can play a role in developing such relationships.

The clinical aspect of the scholarship appears to be a large draw card for students. This should be retained and expanded slightly due to the numbers of students in the pilot wanting to experience more clinical medicine during their placements. This may be achieved through explicit instructions to both general practitioner and student as to what kinds of activities they could be doing. Both parties should also be made aware of the availability of a long term mentoring relationship between the two. Also, effort should be made to allow students to choose a general practice placement location themselves. This is because there is a greater likelihood of graduates practicing close to where they train⁶.

Conclusion

The pilot GPSN First Wave Scholarship program appears to be quite successful in achieving its aim; all students reported an overall positive experience with the program even though there are some areas of the program which can be improved upon. By addressing these areas and factors which students attach a high level of importance to, the effectiveness of the program in attracting general practitioners for the future will be assured.

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