GP registrar consultation duration: associations and implications for training.

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Background

• The duration of general practice consultations arouses considerable concern and debate

• Advocacy by the RCGP in the UK for longer consultations
Quality

• Consultation length has been consistently linked to “quality” of consultation
“Quality”

• booking interval has been associated with improved chronic disease management

• shorter consultation lengths
  – less likely to recognise and deal with chronic problems
  – less likely to recognise and deal with psychosocial problems
  – less patient-centred
Shorter consultations

- Less preventative health activities
- Less clinical notes recording
- Volume and quality of prescribing
A further consideration

- doctor stress is higher in “slower” doctors, especially those with high booking rates
Methods

• Cross sectional study (pilot for a cohort study)
• Registrar and Practice Characteristics
• Patient demographics/diagnoses
• Help sought
• Sixty (60) consecutive patient encounters
• Paper based data collection form
• Pilot - October 2009
Methods: consultation duration

Registrars were instructed to time the consultation duration using their practice software timer.
Statistical analyses

• Linear Regression Model (within Mixed model Framework)
Results

32 registrars

Total of 1919 individual consultations

1788 consultation records contained data on consultation length.
Total Number of Consultations by Time

[Total Consultations = 1919 ; Unknown Consultation Times = 131]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>17.0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td>18.4 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>16.1 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEACH participants</td>
<td>14.6 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average Duration of consultation: Individual Registrars and BEACH participants
Longer duration associated with (registrar variables)

- Term 1 registrars
  - 2.73 minutes
- Australian-born*
  - 2.77 minutes
Longer duration associated with
(practice and patient factors)

- Older patient*
  - 0.03 minutes per year
Longer duration associated with
(consultation factors)

• More than 1 diagnosis made/problem dealt with
  • 7.61 min for 4 problems

• Patient being new to practice
  • 4.11 minutes

• Patient NOT being new to registrar
  • 1.01 minutes

• Psychological problem
  • 3.38 minutes
No association with

- Sex of registrar
- Age of registrar
- Country of training
- Years of hospital training
- SES of patient (SEIFA)
- Rurality
Discussion

• “expected” results
  – Term1 vs term2
  – More problems
  – Psychological problem
  – Patient being new to practice

• pause for thought
  – Patient NOT being new to registrar