

ENHANCED GENERAL PRACTICE TRAINING PLACEMENTS AND THEIR ROLE IN GENERAL PRACTICE TRAINING

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Dear Editor,

General practice (GP) training has undergone a number of changes in recent years. Training used to consist of 18 months secondary care and 18 months of training in general practice before certificate of completion of training (CCT), which enables a medical practitioner to be registered as a specialist or general practitioner in the United Kingdom. As of August 2021, the training programme structure changed, increasing the total amount of time trainees spent in general practice to 24 months. As of August 2022, Health Education West Midlands (the GP training programme coordinator) have begun to offer voluntary enhanced GP training placements (ETP) for 1 to 2 days a week for up to 8 months. This offers trainees the ability to experience alternative roles of GPs and broadens our perspective and upskill. These training placements are aimed at 80% to full-time GP trainees and those who do not experience training difficulties.

There are broadly three types of ETP: (1) Clinical experience beyond the normal GP role or in a different clinical environment, (2) non-patient facing roles within the health system, working with different organisations and groups, and (3) additional roles in an academic or educational setting. Options available to me included Academic, Primary Care Cancer, Child Psychiatry and Eating Disorders, Dermatology, Community Frailty, Heart Failure, Lifestyle Medicine, Medical Education, Medical Leadership, Minor Surgery, Perinatal Mental Health, Respiratory Health, and Rheumatology. These opportunities varied with location. One of the motivations behind the development of the ETPs is that GPs are often regarded as the gatekeepers in the NHS managing a wide range of conditions. There is increasing pressure for patients to be managed in community, an ever-increasing challenge due to an aging population and diminishing numbers of GPs (British Medical Association, 2023). Many GPs are developing extended roles and portfolio careers to achieve better work–life balance. GPs with extended roles are also

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part of the NHS long-term plan, which aims to move more care back into the community.

I choose to apply for an ETP as I am keen to develop an area of interest to achieve better work–life balance and job satisfaction. I choose the placement in dermatology as through my previous GP placements, I had seen a number of different dermatological conditions but felt that I lacked enough knowledge to manage them properly. On average, approximately 15% of a GP workload revolves around dermatological conditions, Kerr et al. (2010). I was also interested in combining practical skills of minor surgery with medical knowledge. This was an area that I was particularly interested in and felt that this ETP would help me to upskill and to begin to prepare me for my post-CCT career and open avenues of GP with an enhanced role.

I have found the placement in dermatology to be an interesting balance of clinics, minor ops, and acute referrals. Through this placement, I have been able to build my confidence and skills in managing common skin conditions and developing my ability to explain these conditions and their management to my patients. I have begun to use and develop competence in dermoscopy, with skin lesions being a common GP presentation. In addition, I am learning to independently perform minor skin surgery such as excision and biopsy.

This placement has allowed me to explore roles for GP outside of the traditional role of GP and for me has created a better work–life balance, creating variation in my work schedule. Full-time GP is a career that can quickly lead to burn out through the high throughput of patients and not always is able to provide the care that we want, Karuna et al. (2022). To any GP trainees out there considering an extended GP position, I would actively encourage you to apply for and participate in one of these schemes to broaden your knowledge and experience and should you wish develop a special interest and further skills.

Yours faithfully,
Dr B Seeley

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