

Abstract

Introducing advanced paramedics into the rural general practice team in Ireland - general practitioners' attitudes

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AUTHORS



Fintan Feerick¹ Masters Student *



Chris O'Connor² Advanced Paramedic, Educator



Peter Hayes³ MD, Senior Lecturer in General Practice



Dervla Kelly⁴ Lecturer

CORRESPONDENCE

*Mr Fintan Feerick fintanfeerick@gmail.com

AFFILIATIONS

^{1, 2} School of Medicine, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

^{3, 4} School of Medicine, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland; and Health Research Institute, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland

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Abstract

Introduction: As Ireland's population increases and chronic disease becomes more prevalent, demand on limited general practice services will increase. Nursing roles within general practice are now considered to be standard, yet alternative non-medical professional roles are underexplored within an Irish context. Non-medical personnel such as Advanced Paramedics (APs) may have the capability to provide support to general practice.

Aim: To explore GPs' attitudes and opinions about integrating Advanced Paramedics into rural general practice in Ireland.

Methods: A sequential explanatory mixed methodology was adopted. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to a purposeful sample of GPs attending a rural conference followed by semi-structured interviews. Data were recorded and transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed.

Results: In total, $n=27$ GPs responded to the survey and $n=13$ GPs were interviewed. Most GPs were familiar with APs and were receptive to the concept of closely collaborating with APs within a variety of settings, including out-of-hours services, home visits, nursing homes and even roles within the general practice surgery.

Discussion: GP and AP clinical practice dovetail within many facets of primary care and emergency care. GPs recognise that current rural models are unsustainable, and they realise the potential of

integrating APs into the general practice team to help support and sustain the future of rural general practice services in Ireland. These interviews provided an exclusive, detailed insight into the world of general practice in Ireland that has not been previously documented in this way.

Keywords: Advanced Paramedic, General practice, General practitioners, Primary care.

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