

## Abstract

A national Delphi study: experiences of general practitioner (GP) trainees in the Republic of Ireland undertaking online small group learning as part of the GP Training Programme during COVID-19

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, GP training day release was redirected from face-to-face to an online setting. With this study, our aim was to assess trainee experiences of online small group learning and to make recommendations with regards to future GP training.

**Methods:** A qualitative study using the Delphi survey technique, approved by the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) Ethics Committee. A series of three sequential online questionnaires were sent to our trainee cohort in all 14 training schemes in Ireland. The first questionnaire explored GP trainee experiences and key themes were generated. Subsequent questionnaires were developed using these themes, with second and third round questionnaires establishing consensus on these experiences.

**Results:** In total, 64 GP trainees responded. Each training scheme was represented. Response rates for round 1 and 2 were 76% and 56% respectively, with round 3 currently underway. Trainees felt that online teaching was convenient, reduced commuting costs, and provided peer support. They also reported loss in unstructured discussion, practical teaching sessions and relationship building. Seven key themes were generated: future format of GP training; accessibility and flexibility; teaching experience; provision of GP training; support and collegiality; educational experience; and technical problems. There is a consensus that some online teaching should be retained for the future.

**Discussion:** Online teaching provided a continuation in training that was more convenient and accessible but affected social interactions and relationship building amongst trainees. Future online sessions could be utilised in a hybrid model of teaching going forward.

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