

Transition of new registrars to general practice

Background

The transition into general practice from the hospital setting represents a major professional, personal, and educational shift for GP/RG registrars. Registrars move from highly structured, team-based hospital environments into community-based practice, where they experience greater autonomy, continuity of care, and responsibility for clinical decision-making.

This early transition period is widely recognised as a time of heightened vulnerability, learning need, and stress. Common challenges include managing workload and time pressures, adapting to new supervisory relationships, understanding practice systems, and shifting from disease-focused care to whole-person, relationship-centred management. Managing the uncertainty of undifferentiated presentations contributes to anxiety, cognitive overload, and potential early performance difficulties.

Effective supervision during this period plays a critical role in supporting registrar confidence, wellbeing, learning, and professional identity formation. Structured professional, educational, and personal support – including explicit discussion of expectations, normalisation of uncertainty, and psychologically safe supervision – promotes patient safety and supports successful transition into community-based practice.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the key clinical, professional, and personal challenges registrars face when transitioning into general practice
- Discuss practical strategies and tools to help orientate and support the transition to general practice
- Reflect on how support can be individualised based on registrar experience, background, and needs.

Discussion Prompts

1. **Understanding the transition experience**
What do you notice most about registrars in their first weeks or months of general practice? Which aspects of transition – professional, educational, or personal – seem to cause the greatest difficulty?
2. **Supervisor expectations and assumptions**
How explicit are you about your expectations of new registrars (e.g. autonomy, help-seeking, documentation, use of time)? What assumptions might supervisors and registrars make about each other during this transition period?
3. **Supporting safety, learning, and wellbeing**
How do you balance patient safety with encouraging registrar independence early in training? What strategies do you use to normalise uncertainty, manage anxiety, and support registrar wellbeing during the transition?

Discussion Prompts continued

4. Using structure to support transition

What formal or informal structures do you use to support transition (e.g. early supervision focus, orientation checklists, supervision plans)? How could these be strengthened or made more consistent across the practice team?

5. Supporting the registrar in difficulty during transition

How do you recognise when a registrar is struggling during early transition to general practice? What supports are most helpful in responding early and effectively, and how do you balance support, safety, and training standards when concerns arise?

Suggestion

Supervisors are encouraged to engage with the GP Survival Kit. In small groups, participants can explore different items in the kit, discuss how and when they would introduce them to registrars, and role-play brief transition conversations using the tools.

Key Takeaways

- Transition to general practice is a predictable period of challenge and vulnerability for registrars
- Explicit discussion of expectations, uncertainty, and help-seeking supports both safety and learning
- Structured supervision and orientation reduce anxiety and enhance registrar confidence
- Practical tools, such as the GP Survival Kit, can scaffold conversations and normalise common challenges
- Good support lays the foundation for effective learning, wellbeing, and professional identity formation.

References and resources

- GPSA guide - The transition to general practice: supporting new GP/RG registrars
- GPSA GP survival kit
- [Tran M, Prentice S. Transitions, adaptation and uncertainty in general practice training. Aust J Gen Pract. 2025 Nov;54\(11\):774-777](#)