

Bad attitude? Conflict in GP training

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Introduction

Conflict for doctors in training is well recognised, however most of the writing relates to the hospital environment, and to conflict between doctors, staff and the patient or the patient's family. There are few studies that relate to conflict in GP training in Australia. Understanding risk and protective factors for these conflicts—particularly between GP supervisors and registrars—and their context, is important for ensuring the wellbeing and sustainability of the Australian GP workforce. The aim of this study was to identify the sources and contexts of conflict within GP supervisor/practice manager relationships with GP registrars.

Method

Participants

The sample comprised > 100 GP supervisors, registrars, and practice managers. Preliminary analysis suggests that there was good representation by practice role, age, gender, state/territory and metro/non-metro.

Materials and Procedure

Respondents completed online anonymous surveys (Oct-Nov 2021) about their sociodemographic factors, experience/observation of conflicts, actions taken to address/resolve conflict, and processes/resources that were helpful.

Results

The top 5 most frequently identified sources of conflict were in relation to attitudes, feedback, communication, employment conditions, and rosters/scheduling. Registrars were more likely to experience/observe conflicts related to teaching and poor communication than supervisors. Practice managers were more likely to experience/observe conflicts related to billing and base salary or bonuses than supervisors. Roster/scheduling conflicts were more likely for registrars and practice managers than supervisors. Supervisors were more likely to experience/observe conflicts related to teaching and employment conditions than practice managers.

Discussion

These findings show that conflict in Australian General Practice Training is common, which is consistent with the literature in other healthcare contexts. Most GP supervisors and practice managers believed conflicts were easily resolved, however, registrars generally did not. These results will inform the development of a guide for supervisors and practice managers to improve workplace relationships with registrars.

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