

# Eliminating isolation: virtual communities of practice

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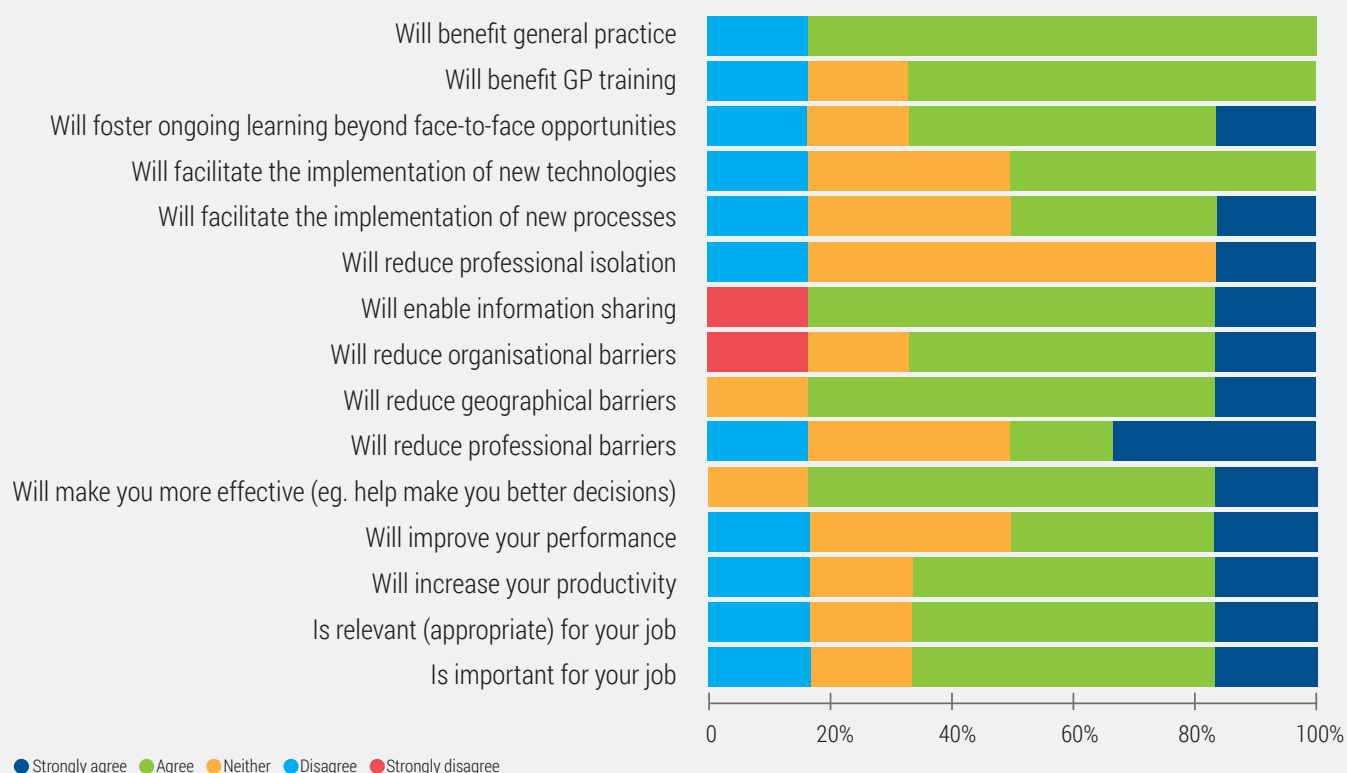
Communities of practice unite people with common interests to share ideas, resources, knowledge, and skills<sup>1</sup>, which may not otherwise be readily accessible<sup>2</sup>. When these communities are offered online, they can foster collaboration by overcoming time, space, and cost constraints<sup>1</sup>. For those living and working in regional and remote locations, virtual communities of practice have the potential to overcome isolation in general practice<sup>3,4</sup>.

GPSA members have free access to a virtual community of practice, which is designed to overcome the isolation of general practice through knowledge sharing, support, and professional development opportunities in a safe, online environment (<https://community.gpsa.org.au>).

To explore key factors associated with engagement in the community, GPSA recently convened a workshop at the annual Rural Medicine Australia conference in Hobart, Tasmania for those involved in GP training (19th Oct 2023).

Most attendees were GP supervisors and/or medical educators who rated themselves as 'capable' to 'proficient' users of various online and face-to-face resources (eg., social media, virtual communities of practice). Overall, attendees generally agreed that participating in virtual communities of practice was beneficial to their role in GP training, particularly as a means by which to reduce geographical barriers and improve role effectiveness, such as decision-making (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. The perceived benefits of participating in virtual communities of practice (N = 6)**



At the conclusion of the workshop, 80% of attendees reported their intention to participate in GPSA's virtual community of practice. Future research will explore the impact of GPSA's virtual community of practice on uniting those involved in GP training in a shared sense of connection, inclusion, learning, and resilience.

To find out more about joining GPSA's virtual community of practice, visit <https://gpsa.org.au/community-platform-help/> or contact Karen Andrews at [governance@gpsa.org.au](mailto:governance@gpsa.org.au)

## References

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