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Research papers this month

Cooperation and conflict between GPs and hospital consultants

The relationship between GPs and consultants is important in a healthcare system based on the generalist as the first point of contact for patients and as the gatekeeper for hospital services. In this study, Marshall investigates this relationship, paying particular attention to the balance between cooperation and conflict. The results show that there is a high level of mutual respect and cooperation between the two branches of the profession, and few areas of significant disagreement.

Practice nurses views of their roles in caring for mental health problems

Crosland and Kai note that primary care teams have been encouraged to develop the care they provide to patients with mental health problems, and that a greater role for practice nurses has been advocated. Their qualitative study describes the current experiences of practice nurses caring for patients with mental health problems, and explores their perceptions about enlarging this role. They conclude that developing the practice nurse's contribution will require further training and support.

Self-assessment by GP trainees before and after a psychiatric placement

GPs are responsible for managing the majority of mental health problems, however, there is evidence that the recognition and management of mental disorders could be improved. This questionnaire survey by Kelwyn Williams aimed to determine whether GP trainees thought that a six-month psychiatric placement had improved their clinical competence. The conclusions showed that competency improved in all but one area, but that skills were ranked more highly in dealing with hospital-based problems than those encountered in primary care.

Developing, validating and consolidating the doctor-patient relationship

In this qualitative study, Gore and Ogden examine the patients' views of the process of creating a relationship with their GP. The in-depth interviews held with frequently attending patients established that creating a relationship with a GP is a dynamic process involving an active patient who searches out a GP who matches their own representation of the 'ideal', selects and retains information to validate their choice, and locates mutually acceptable boundaries.

GPs' attitudes to the development of midwifery group practices

Changing childbirth has led to the development of midwifery-led schemes that intend to increase the continuity of maternity care. Fenwick *et al*'s postal survey aimed to determine the impact of midwifery group practices on the work of GPs and the GPs' perceptions of such group practice care. The authors found that GPs were generally positive about the quality of care provided, but issues remain that require addressing in the development of this model of care.

Development and reliability of the RCGPs' questionnaire for measuring SHO's satisfaction with their hospital training

Hand and Adams note the training provided for senior house officers (SHOs) has been the subject of debate. Their aim was to develop a reliable questionnaire to measure SHO satisfaction with hospital training. The 42-item questionnaire the authors developed was deemed reliable, acceptable to doctors, and feasible to administer. They conclude that national acceptance of such a questionnaire would enable standards to be monitored regularly.

Equitable systems for allocating deprivation payments: financial consequences

O'Reilly and Steele comment on the controversial topic of the allocation of GP deprivation payments, and explore the resource implications of the proposed changes to the methods of allocating the payments within Northern Ireland. They found that the proportion of the population attracting payments depends on the scheme chosen, and that more equitable alternatives are feasible, although they will lead to significant movements of funds between areas.

Analysis of 1263 deaths in four general practices

For Holden *et al*, the death of a patient occurs often enough in general practice to tell GPs much about the care they provide. From the completion of a standard data collection form after each death, this simple audit gave important information on the preventable factors contributing to the deaths. The authors advocate that such audits also have educational value and can be a source of ideas for improvement and further study.

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