



ATTRACTING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS INTO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITMENT

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POLICY CONTEXT

Workforce projections suggest a fall in the number of full-time equivalent general practitioners during the next decade unless more doctors choose general practice as a career. Australia is already experiencing a shortage of GPs and the crisis in the medical workforce is even more pronounced in rural and remote areas. This paper explores the factors that affect career and practice location choice of medical students and junior doctors.

KEY FINDINGS

The GP shortage in the Australian health care system mirrors similar shortages in health services of other developed countries. Such shortages are due to many factors including general practice becoming less popular as a career choice, the demographics and lifestyle aspirations of many medical students and junior doctors, and the increase in the primary health care needs of the population. The new generation of doctors is looking for flexibility in training and work practice. In particular female doctors want and need to combine family commitments with patient care giving.

- A shortage of GPs and other community-based health professionals will have profound effects on health service delivery and health services at a time when the prevalence of chronic disease is rising
- There are many interrelated factors that affect career choice for doctors and other health professionals. Some of these may be influenced and others are more difficult to change.
- To influence the career choices of future medical graduates interventions, and thus policies, need to be implemented before, during and after medical school
- Australian medical schools tend to see their mission as graduating high quality doctors able to work as interns, but not focused on a particular career pathway – though many medical schools, and especially newer medical schools, do have a specific remit to be cognisant of the needs of the communities they serve
- The attractions of general practice, and other aspects of community and rural medical practice need to be promoted by all relevant organisations and enhanced by policy changes
- While some of these policy changes need to be financial, others are related to vocational training and the flexibility of training and service delivery

For more details, go to the [three page report](#).

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