



WHAT IS THE PLACE OF GENERALISM IN THE 2020 PRIMARY HEALTH CARE TEAM?

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POLICY CONTEXT

Primary health care is a domain of reform and change. To maintain a cost-effective, equitable and accessible health care system, policy and strategies must address growing health system complexities. These include workforce shortages, technological advances, an ageing population, rising rates of chronic disease, increases in co-morbidity and growing multi-morbidities. A single-disease focussed approach is not sufficient. Should the generalist be developed to address these multiple issues? What is generalism and its place within the 2020 primary health care team?

We systematically reviewed the available evidence on the place of generalism within primary health care to document the essential dimensions of the generalist approach to develop sustainable options for primary health care in 2020.

KEY FINDINGS

- There is no agreed definition of generalism. Generalism in primary health care has not been formally conceptualised. The review identified the essential dimensions of generalism and represented these as a [continuum](#). Generalism is the result of the continual interaction of three essential dimensions: ways of being; ways of knowing; and ways of doing
- A generalist approach delivers equitable, accessible, cost-effective care for patients
- Commentators signal alarm at the devaluation of and reduced emphasis on generalism. While there is strong support for generalism, there is also concern about the increasingly complex knowledge and skills required to practice as a generalist signalling the need for high calibre graduates
- The three dimensions and their interaction combine to form a philosophy of practice. This philosophy is represented in a [conceptual model](#) of the essential dimensions

For more details, please go to the [full report](#)

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