Self-assessment in General Practice
Vocational Training

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Candidate Declaration

I certify that the thesis entitled *Self-assessment in General Practice Vocational Training* submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Tasmania contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis. To the best of my knowledge and belief no material has been previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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Publications and Presentations

The following published works and presentations arose from the self-assessment study in this dissertation:


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Abstract

Objectives: This dissertation explores the utility of self-assessment for trainee general practitioners in Australia and examines the implications of self-assessment for skills acquisition by reflecting upon educational theory and research.

Aims: The study at the core of this dissertation aims to evaluate general practice vocational training from the perspective of learners using self-assessment. Using a model developed from the self-assessment literature, the study examines the extent to which trainees view themselves as competent in key curriculum areas. Research questions consider whether participation in general practice training results in a measurable increase in self-assessed competence in the key areas of general practice training, and to what extent trainees are satisfied with the program. Also considered is the relationship between the two concepts of satisfaction and self-assessed competence, and the correlation between examination results and self-assessments.

Method: Qualitative analysis of empirical research on self-assessment studies in medical education and selected theories of adult and experiential learning produced a model with which to evaluate aspects of general practice vocational training from the perspective of the learner. A national sample of trainees of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners participated in a three-year longitudinal panel study from 1999 to 2001.
Results: Six hundred and twenty-two trainees completed the survey in year one, 549 trainees in year two and 472 trainees in year three. The sample mirrored that of the population of general practice trainees. A sample of 161 trainees participated in all three surveys and their results on competence and satisfaction were compared over time. The model tested provided information about the significance and role of self-assessment to evaluate aspects of general practice vocational training from the perspective of the learner. It established that participation in general practice vocational training resulted in an increase of self-assessed competence in areas of the curriculum, and that trainees were generally satisfied with their training experiences. The variables of stage of training, gender, locality and workload provided insights into the utility of trainee self-assessments, particularly in relation to their strengths and weaknesses. The results suggest that as they progress, the longitudinal cohort of trainees viewed themselves as improving an average of nine percent in their self-assessed competence rating in the five domains of general practice, seven percent for the care of particular patient groups and 11 percent for the management of particular patient presentations. This pattern of consistent differences, in the same individuals over time, supported the idea that a process is at work whereby trainees’ confidence improved as they progress through training.
Implications: The baseline data emerging from this study provide findings that might usefully contribute to the debates surrounding future training needs and self-assessment, and the enhancement of the conditions around the delivery of general practice vocational training. This is particularly pertinent to the environment of general practice vocational training, in which there are multiple training providers, and to the development of continuing medical education.