



Irish Medical Times

SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC PRIMARY CARE

The badmouthing of general practice must be addressed

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Denigration of general practice as the career choice of young doctors is widespread in hospital and primary care training environments, research suggests.

The UK study, presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society for Academic Primary Care at Dublin Castle last week, sought to examine if negative comments put trainees off a career as a GP.

The authors, from the School of Medical Education at Newcastle University, said there was a national recruitment crisis in the UK, with only half of GP training places being taken up in some areas, and there was anecdotal evidence that negative comments were being made to medical students and young doctors.

The team convened six focus groups of year one GP trainees in the North East of England and asked them about their

experience of having positive and negative comments made to them by clinical teachers about their choice during their time as a medical student, foundation doctor or during their specialty training.

"What we found was there was widespread active denigration of general practice going on both within the hospital but also in general practice from GP trainers themselves," said co-author **Dr Joanna Hall**.

Dr Hall said trainees effectively had to "justify their choice" to senior colleagues. They reported being asked questions like, "Why do you not want to do something else?", she said.

A recurring theme was the notion of trainees becoming "just a GP". A career as a GP was referred to by some hospital clinicians as a "cop out" or an "easy life". Comments made often related to GPs being "lesser doctors" and trainees

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were often told they were "too good" to be a GP or that they would be "wasted as a GP".

"Some of the comments that came back were jaw-dropping in terms of being quite unprofessional, coming from consultants, saying GPs are totally rubbish and they are lousy doctors that couldn't make it in other specialties," said Dr Hall.

However, she said there were also positive comments, par-

ticularly from hospital consultants who were often very supportive of trainees.

"Other participants perceived their hospital clinical teachers to be promoting their own specialities rather than demoting general practice," the authors said.

The authors said badmouthing of general practice as a career must be addressed as a discriminatory issue, and Dr Hall added that GP trainees should be encouraged to challenge negative comments.