

## ERG 2025-24: Exploring the factors that influence prevocational doctors to choose General Practice as their specialty training program

### Aim

We wanted to understand what factors influence prevocational doctors, particularly those in their first two post graduate years, to consider or exclude general practice or rural generalism as their specialty training program. Our research particularly focussed on personal and professional influences, the influence of medical school and prevocational training, and what barriers exist to deter early career doctors from considering a career in general practice or rural generalism.

### What we did

- We undertook a national survey of prevocational doctors, distributed through professional career networks.
- These surveys included questions for all respondents, and questions that were relevant to participants depending on their interest in general practice, rural generalism, or other specialty choices.
- Survey respondents were offered the opportunity to express an interest in subsequent focus groups.
- Focus groups were undertaken to explore factors ranked most important in the survey. This method was chosen as it promoted discussion between participants, allowing for deeper understanding of the meaning of factors and their real-world impacts.
- Focus groups were split to either with participants who selected general practice or rural generalism as their top choice, or with those who were considering these specialities but not currently their top choice, to allow similar experiences and drivers to be discussed.

### What we found

- Our online survey received 430 valid responses.
- Detailed analysis continues, however some key important themes for prevocational doctors interested in general practice and rural generalism include work-life balance, workload and responsibilities, and family-related factors.
- 7 focus groups were undertaken including 27 participants. 4 focus groups were with those participants who had indicated general practice or rural generalism as their top specialty choice, 3 focus groups with those expressing an interest in these specialities without it being their top choice.
- Analysis of these transcripts are underway with publication of data planned.

## What it means

- Following further analysis and publications, we will have shared a key understanding of the factors influencing prevocational career choice for Australian doctors, a current gap in the modern literature.
- We expect this information may be useful for the RACGP and GP sector; for medical educators and administrators in hospital settings; for state, territory and federal government; and hopefully for prevocational doctors considering their career choices.
- Focussed interventions could be planned around these most important factors as part of workforce monitoring and planning.

## Sharing findings to date

We have presented at two national conferences in with preliminary findings in 2025: the Prevocational Medical Education Forum and RACGP's GP25. We have also been accepted to present in the UK at the Society for Academic Primary Care's conference in June 2026.

Manuscripts for academic publication are in progress; we would be happy to share published articles once available – please contact Dr Chris Dickie through details below. We also aim to produce a grey literature report, to be shared with stakeholders, following our academic publications.

## Future Research

Areas for future research, some of which we may be able to consider from our datasets, include:

- The impact of family members working in healthcare on specialty choice
- Whether rurality during schooling impacts later career choices
- Further understanding of specific factors, why does work-life matter, what does that mean and do other factors e.g. age/family intersect

## Find out more

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