GP SUPERVISORS – AN INVESTIGATION INTO THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

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Background

General practice (GP) supervisors are considered the cornerstone of GP training, but there is little empirical information on how GP supervisors teach and the reasons for the variation in their teaching methods. Could the variation in teaching methods be due to differing motivations to teach? Specifically, are supervisors motivated by workforce needs less likely to provide face to face feedback to registrars, use registrar learning plans, undertake direct and video observation of consultations and use random case analysis?

Aims/objective

This study aims to provide an evidence base to structure programs to assess, recruit and support supervisors.

Methods/approach

A purposive sample of supervisors was obtained by surveying all supervisors attending an annual education workshop in 2013 seeking information on their motivation to become and remain a supervisor and the frequency of their teaching activities.

Results/findings

A total of 93 supervisors attended the workshops with 84 surveys returned giving a response rate of 90%. The majority of respondents cited intrinsic motivators to be a GP supervisor including enjoying teaching (84%), contribution to the profession and community (82%), adding variety (78%) and for workforce/succession planning (69%). Most commonly used supervision methods were opportunistic clinical discussion and face to face teaching whereas other teaching methods were performed less frequently. The expected relationships between motivations and teaching activities were not found. Practice location or whether the supervisor was an international medical graduate had no impact on motivation or teaching activities.

Discussion

Measuring the frequency of use of teaching activities is unlikely to determine a supervisor’s commitment to teaching.

Supervisor recruitment and retention should focus on the intrinsic value of teaching to the supervisor rather than workforce or financial benefit.

Further research into why GPs choose not to become a supervisor is needed.