

# Supporting exam success in General Practice

In the East of England, the School of General Practice (GP) was able to minimise extensions to training in the region by providing additional support to trainees and educators with exam preparations.

## Background

To obtain a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) in GP, medical trainees must complete the requirements of the MRCGP, an integrated assessment system comprising an Applied Knowledge Test (AKT), a Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) and workplace-based assessment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the School identified a number of challenges to trainees preparing for and undertaking certain MRCGP assessments.

Firstly, ST3 GP trainees in the region had limited experience working in GP prior to the onset of the pandemic. To exacerbate this, the pandemic considerably reduced face-to-face patient consultations, limiting trainees' experiences to practice associated clinical skills.

Trainees and educators are required to undertake a new clinical skills exam – the Recorded Consultation Assessment (RCA) – as an alternative to the CSA during the period of COVID-19 disruption. The introduction of this new exam has meant trainees have needed additional preparation time, during which time access to peer and educator support has been altered.

Lastly, the demands of the final year of the programme on trainees could be confounded by the pressures of working during the pandemic. This has the potential to disadvantage trainees who are undertaking the AKT.

## Supporting exam success for GP trainees

In response to the challenges identified, the School has provided a suite of resources to support trainees and educators with preparations for the RCA and AKT exams during the pandemic. This has included:

- coordinating a series of small group meetings for trainees, giving them additional peer support and exam preparation for the RCA. Trainees have had opportunities to role play clinical scenarios which reflect the type of consultation taking place during the pandemic;

- hosting a series of webinars for GP educators, to help them understand the new RCA exam and their role in supporting trainees;
- delivering its regional CSA preparation courses and CSA Support on Extension (SOX) programme virtually and adapting them to address the needs of the new RCA exam;
- enhancing the provision of AKT preparation courses and delivering these virtually, and
- following January 2021 exams, piloting an AKT SOX programme to help prepare GP trainees taking the exam again in April 2021. The School subsequently collaborated with the North West School of GP to develop a sustainable AKT SOX programme to complement their RCA SOX programme.

### Supporting training recovery

As a result of the programme of support, the School have reported the following achievements:

- increased their average RCA score for trainees on the SOX programmes by 14%;
- increased their average CSA score for trainees on the pilot AKT SOX programme by 12%, and
- trained 41 educators in the region via its AKT SOX programme, upskilling them on how best to support trainees with their AKT exam preparation.

By supporting trainees and educators with exam preparation, the School has reported a reduction in the predicted number of extensions in GP training in the region.

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