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25th Annual Practitioners Conference

**The new family medicine rotation for medical interns: A
review in the Western Cape province**

L Jenkins; L Hutton, B Mash, J Morgan, K Von Pressentin, S Reid, P Kapp

Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town, Western Cape Department of Health

Background



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- 1950s – One year. Rotations chosen by intern.
- 2004 – Two years. Rotations in major disciplines and 3/12 in FM.
- 2021 - Introduction of a 6-month FM rotation during 2nd year of training.
- Spent at district hospitals (DHs) and primary health care (PHC) facilities, led by family physicians.
- HPCSA sets specific aims and objectives for learning, with a logbook to clarify and document the required knowledge, skills and experience.
- Medical & clinical managers, and intern curators at accredited facilities are responsible for ensuring that the HPCSA's requirements are met.

1. Refs

Aim



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To assess the new 6-month family medicine rotation for medical interns at district health facilities in the Western Cape.

Objectives

- To describe the different models of organising the programme
- To evaluate the learning of interns and how they developed as health professionals
- To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

Insights gained would help shape the intern programme in the Western Cape with possible transferable lessons for other South African provinces.

Methods



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Study design

- Cross-sectional descriptive observational survey of interns and their supervisors.
- The survey was the second phase of an exploratory sequential mixed methods study, whereas the first phase was an exploratory qualitative study.
- Themes from this 1st study informed the design of the questionnaire for the survey.

Setting

- Metropolitan health services (MHS) and rural health services (RHS).
- 3 tertiary facilities, 5 regional hospitals and 37 district hospitals.
- Interns based at tertiary, regional, district hospitals and PHC facilities.
- 660 internship posts in 2020, across 10 training complexes, half of them in their first year and half in their second year.
- Complexes utilised 13 DHs & 38 PHC facilities for the FM programme in 2nd year.



Methods...

Study population and sampling

- Study population: all second-year interns and their supervisors involved in FM intern training at Western Cape facilities in 2022.
- No sampling - whole study population was invited to participate.

Data collection

- Two questionnaires: 1. interns 2. supervisors, based on themes from qualitative study.
- Validated and piloted prior to use to ensure face validity and feasibility.
- Created in REDCap and administered electronically to respondents.
- Electronic link, sent via email - distributed questionnaires, in the 2nd half of the year.
- FP supervisors & intern curators assisted with accessing the interns and supervisors.
- Weekly reminder to those who started but did not complete the survey.

Results



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- 72 interns completed the questionnaires (response rate 21%)
- 36 supervisors completed (response rate 80%), across 10 training programmes.
- Interns: more independent (97.2%), confident (90.3%), resilient (91.6%).
- They learnt to manage undifferentiated and chronic conditions (91.6%), to refer patients (94.3%) and conduct procedures (77.8%).
- Interns were not exposed to community-based services (68.0%) and continuity of care (54.1%).
- Many interns reported no structured teaching programme (41.7-55.6%).

Results



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- Supervision was mostly adequate during the day (79.1%) and afterhours (80.6%).
- Most supervision was from medical officers and registrars.
- Supervisors saw interns as valuable members of the clinical team (100.0%)
- Supervisors reported that interns required extra support and administration (42.5%).
- Majority interns (75.0%) & supervisors (72.7%) thought the rotation was right length & the best preparation for COSMO year (67.6%)

Intern in district hospital



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Conclusion

- The rotation met most expectations of the Health Professions Council of South Africa.
- Programmes need to improve exposure to community-orientated primary care, public health medicine, palliative and ongoing care.
- Attention is needed to adequate supervision and orientation.
- A low response limits generalisability and similar surveys should be conducted in other provinces.