

Telephone survey of private patients' views on continuity of care and registration with general practice in Ireland

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Description

The desire of patients for personal continuity of care with a General Practitioner (GP) has been well documented, but not within non-registered private patients in Ireland. This study set out to examine the attitudes and reported behaviours of private fee-paying patients towards continuity of GP care and universal registration for patients.

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. 97% of respondents had seen a GP in the previous 5 years. The mean number of visits to the GP for respondents was 2.3 per annum. 89% of respondents had a regular GP and the mean length of time with their GP was 15.6 years. 96% preferred their personal medical care to be provided within one general practice. 16% of respondents had consulted a GP outside of their own practice in the previous year. They were more likely to be female, commute a longer distance to work or have poorer health status. 81% considered it important to be officially registered with a GP practice of their choice.

Conclusion

Both personal and longitudinal continuity of care with a GP are important to private patients. Respondents who chose to visit GPs other than their regular GP were not easily characterised in this study and individual circumstances may lead to this behaviour. There is strong support for a system of universal patient registration within general practice.

Objectives

This study set out to examine the attitudes and reported behaviours of private fee-paying patients towards continuity of GP care and universal registration for patients. In addition, we sought to identify parameters that might define a practice population in the absence of universal patient registration.

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