

Establishing an ICGP program of global healthcare for the purposes of learning from and supporting evolving healthcare systems of low and middle income countries (v2)(7/18)

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Introduction

On May 26th 2018, the AGM of The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) determined to establish an effective program of global healthcare, to be delivered by the College, with a view to enabling College Members, Practice Teams and associates to have useful impact in the development of primary care and chronic disease services in health systems of low and middle income countries (LMICs).

At this time, it is evident that a substantial proportion of Irish GPs, and many in their practice teams, have both considerable interest and experience in this area of healthcare. This became evident within College following the establishment of an ICGP Special Interest Group (SIG) in Global Health in April 2017, following which several College Members, GP Trainees and some Practice Team members formally shared their knowledge and first hand experiences, and also following a survey of GPs and Practice Nurses undertaken at the end of 2017.

Further, a summary of ICGP experience was also presented to the Forum of Postgraduate Training Bodies in 2018, where it was evident that the collective experience of GPs commanded the respect and interest of the Forum, and while not as well developed or as organised as that of colleagues at the RCPI, RCSI or College of Anaesthetists, nonetheless, it was of account. Further, the clear consensus at the Forum was that the emerging importance of non communicable diseases (NCDs) rendered General Practice and Primary Care to be of exceptional importance in the context of global health in the intermediate term.

In particular, there was clear recognition of the capacity and the potential of the ICGP in terms of primary care service development, educational development, research capacity and personal professional development within the disciplines of primary care. Clear consensus exists regarding effective collaboration among College Members, their practice teams, and the educational and research departments within College, together with interaction and collaboration with relevant external agencies, including sister Colleges at the Forum of Postgraduate Training Bodies, the HSE, relevant state agencies and international agencies, which would now be worthwhile.

This discussion paper is now published in order to stimulate and guide this collaboration.

In particular, this discussion paper will build on the rationale above to include a series of objectives for 1, 3 and 5 years, during the period of 2019 – 2024, with particular reference to the GP community in Ireland, and elsewhere.

Key Principles of ICGP Global Healthcare Program

The development and availability of effective primary care for all people is a basic human right

Societies and communities which are relatively resource rich, and communities with well developed health systems have an obligation towards societies and communities which are less so.

Individuals with relevant knowledge, skills, experience and interest in assisting with the provision of more effective and appropriate primary care to all people in LMICs should be supported

Interventions in the evolving health systems of LMICs should be undertaken with informed, clear commitment, and essential respect for the particular needs and circumstances of the individuals likely to benefit from the services under consideration.

Such interventions should be undertaken in collaboration and consultation with governments, ministries of health, training bodies and all local, relevant stakeholders, including people for whom the intervention is intended to benefit.

Such interventions are best based on scientific evidence, informed by educational and clinical practice, and on evolving research.

Respecting the principal of opportunity cost, educational and clinical services will be delivered at the most effective levels of cost, complexity and convenience, with reference to the health system for which they are planned and delivered, the economics and capabilities of the communities concerned, and the needs of the people and of the health care providers of those communities.

The efforts and work of individuals engaged with and supportive of this program should be recognised, in a modest and appropriate manner

Core skills and capabilities of this program will include relevant research, educational, technological, communications, human resources, political and logistical skills and capabilities, which list will be extended as necessary, in responding to defined healthcare needs of citizens in particular circumstances

The ICGP Global Healthcare Program will collaborate and co-ordinate with internal and external agencies when, where, and as appropriate, in achieving its objectives

Methods

There are presently three key outputs of the ICGP SIG Global Health.

1. Workshops run by the SIG at ICGP Summer and Winter Meetings in 2017, and AGM 2018.
2. Survey of ICGP Members and IPNA Members, which resulted in c 247 responses where those responding indicated either previous experience and / or interest in future activities relevant to Global Health.

3. ICGP input at a special meeting of the Forum of postgraduate training Bodies, reflected in a brief meeting report, together with an article in Forum in 2018, outlining the meeting and the activities of the SIG for College Members.

Following from the formal decision of The ICGP at the 2018 AGM, it is now proposed to

- a. Agree a 3 and 5 year plan for the SIG and the ICGP, to deliver a program on ICGP Global Health
- b. Continue to gather, collate and share the experience of GPs and Practice Team Members
- c. Continue to communicate objectives of the SIG through regular College Workshops
- d. Establish an Orientation Workshop, for individuals / teams considering getting involved
- d. Engage with other Postgraduate Training Bodies to define synergies and share experience
- e. Explore and form partnerships with government/academic and training bodies in partner countries, perform needs assessment and establish programme of activities in collaboration with partners
- f. Engage with Government Agencies, particularly The HSE, the Department of Health and Irish Aid
- g. Engage with relevant agencies with essential skills / capacity eg development of e learning
- h. Establish a program of multiannual international actions, initially following a North/South pathway
- i. Collate and develop knowledge relating to unmet needs in developing health systems

Results /Outcomes

Expected outcomes will include the following.

Year 1

1. Further development of ICGP SIG Global Health within the ICGP and IPNA (Practices Nurses)

Database and mailing list of active members (2018-19)

Solicit and collate brief project reports (see appendix 1) (2019)

Establish subgroups of 2-3 individuals (2018) for

Funding
Project Management
Research & Education
Communication
Ethics

2. Funding and recruitment for an ICGP Global Health Project Manager (2019)

3. Internal Communications including real time reporting/sharing of College Members activities (2019)
4. External Communications including the broader professional space and the public domain (2019)
5. Draft detailed plans for 1-2 international whole of College Projects (2019)
6. Prepare a standard workshop for delivery to GP Training and at College Faculty Meetings on request

Year 3 Established and active mailing list of College and Practice Team Members
 Regular Workshops sharing experiences, and also for the purpose of orientation
 Strong Network within Forum of Postgraduate Training Bodies
 Project Manager in place, and an agreed and detailed service plan
 Global Health will be formally reflected in GP Specialty Training and College CME activities

Year 5 A major and sustainable program of research, education and service development will
 be well underway, most likely with one or several African States

A number of smaller programs may also be underway depending on the capacity and
 interest of College and its members

From the perspective of individual College Members and Practice Teams, there are numerous ways by
 which activity and involvement can be delivered. While many individuals may see themselves as going out
 and delivering care, in actual fact there are many other equally or more valuable ways to contribute
 meaningfully, and the activities of the SIG in highlighting to people contemplating active involvement in
 these is important. These involvements can include

Developing culturally and scientifically appropriate research and educational material
 Fundraising at all levels, including at the practice and community level, up to securing state grants
 Assisting with the work and governance of the SIG on a day to day basis
 Fieldwork, including exploratory, needs assessment, service development, outcomes research, peer
 support, development of a full range of educational activities, ranging from devising suitable and effective
 primary educational activities to peer support/supervision and education i.e. without going into the field.

Governance

Governance for these activities will be based on that already in place for the ICGP SIG Global Health. The
 group will maintain a nominated member to represent it on The Educational Governance Committee,
 which in turn reports and informs College Board. Further, the activities of the group are communicated to
 ICGP Senior Management Team (SMT) via Mr Fintan Foy, College CEO, who has undertaken to be the link
 between the SIG and the SMT for the time being

Ethics

Emergent ethical considerations fall under several main headings including the following risks

- Risks to College and Practice Team members who are engaged on activities
- Risks to international colleagues and individuals from sub optimal or inappropriate SIG Activities

Analysis

It is evident from SIG Activities that a substantial proportion of ICGP members and some of their Practice Teams either have a substantial volume of largely small scale activity in this area of care, and / or are interested in maintaining and developing this in the years ahead. Further, there is a clear and continuing need to engage in this, and given the knowledge and experience within the ICGP in education, research and service delivery, particularly in the areas of prevention, diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care of non communicable illness, that the ICGP and its members and affiliates are well placed to contribute positively, and that efforts in this will be optimised through the involvement of the ICGP as opposed to the individual efforts of its members.

Risks to achieving this relate to finite time and energy of College Members, inertia arising from committee process, failure to establish a credible program, sufficiently so to attract available funding, and / or planning initiatives which are either unacceptable and / or ineffective, given the needs of the health systems and societies for which they are intended.

APPENDIX 1 Short Reporting Form

This form can be circulated to any SIG Member or affiliate who is engaged or who has completed a project in global health, and is designed with a view to posting it on the ICGP SIG Webpage for general interest.

Thank you for completing this brief pro forma which seeks to provide a standardised outline of any project work you have undertaken in relation to Global Health. The purpose of this form is to capture relevant experience, links to relevant agencies, funders, knowledge resources, making these available to the ICGP SIG Global Health, and to individuals who are themselves planning a project and who could benefit from your valuable experience.

Name:

Background:

Contact Information:

(If you would prefer to keep your contact information private, please indicate accordingly)

I am happy for my contact information to be linked with this project on www.icgp.ie []

I do not want my contact information to be linked with this project on www.icgp.ie []

Simple description of project: (eg Country / nature of project / who else was involved / when did it start and has it finished)

When and how did you begin to become interested in this project ?

Did you engage with any agencies in Ireland / EU ?

If so, please identify, describe the nature and outcome of any interaction, and a comment / appraisal on the value of the interaction

Did you engage with any agencies locally (ie locally or in the Project Country) ?

If so, please identify, describe the nature and outcome of any interaction, and a comment / appraisal on the value of the interaction

Please comment on the value to you of your involvement with this project

Please comment on the value of this project to citizens locally

If you were planning this again, would you do anything differently ?

Are you planning any further activity in this area of care ? If so, please briefly describe with a putative timeline.

Thanks for sharing your valuable experience, which is greatly appreciated. Given the reflective nature of completing and sharing this standardised report, you may consider it appropriate for 1 Internal CME point.