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# **A Career in General Practice**



## The Irish College of General Practitioners

### *About the Irish College of General Practitioners*

The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) is the professional body for education, training, research and standards in general practice.

### *College Activities*

- Teaching, training and education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels
- Accreditation of specialist training programmes in general practice
- Operates a professional competence scheme under arrangement with the Medical Council
- Examining body for membership in general practice (MICGP)
- Continuing education and professional development
- Research
- Practice management support through training, advice and consultancy
- General practitioner health
- Public relations and media liaison on behalf of the profession
- General practice publications, guidelines and protocols
- Advice and support to members
- Advocacy on behalf of the profession with external agencies.

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## What is a general practitioner?

A general practitioner is a medical graduate who gives personal, primary and continuing care to individuals, families and a practice population, irrespective of age, gender and illness; it is the synthesis of these functions which is unique.

A GP will:

- Attend patients in consulting rooms, in patients' homes and sometimes in clinics or hospital settings. Their aim is to make early diagnosis.
- Include and integrate physical, psychological and social factors in their considerations about health and illness. This will be expressed in their care of patients.
- Make an initial decision about every problem which is presented to them as a doctor.
- Undertake the continuing treatment of patients which chronic, recurrent or terminal illness. Prolonged contact means that the GP can use repeated opportunities to gather information at a pace appropriate to each patient and build up a relationship of trust, which can be used professionally.
- Practice in co-operation with other colleagues, medical and non-medical.
- Know when and how to intervene through treatment, prevention and education, to promote the health of patients and their families.
- Recognise that they also have a professional responsibility to the community

This guide is designed to inform prospective applicants for GP training in Ireland of the steps in the recruitment process, stages of GP training and qualification.

# Definition of general practice

## The European Definition of General Practice

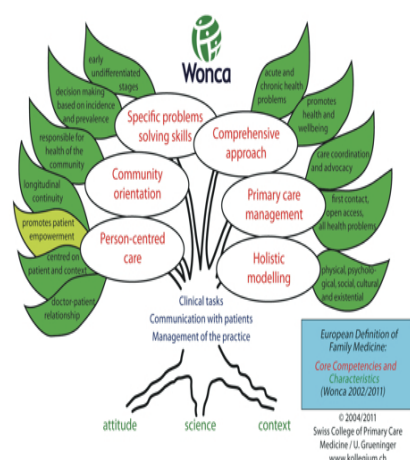
As family doctors are known as general practitioners in some European countries, and family medicine practitioners in others, a general practitioner is the term used in this document.

General practitioners are specialist physicians trained in the principles of the discipline. They are personal doctors, primarily responsible for the provision of comprehensive and continuing care to every individual seeking medical care irrespective of age, sex and illness. They care for individuals in the context of their family, their community and their culture, always respecting the autonomy of their patients. They recognise they will also have a professional responsibility to their community. In negotiating management plans with their patients they integrate physical, psychological, social, cultural and existential factors, utilising the knowledge and trust engendered by repeated contacts. General practitioners exercise their professional role by promoting health, preventing disease and providing cure, care or palliation and promoting patient empowerment and self-management. This is done either directly or through the services of others according to the health needs and resources available within the community they serve, assisting patients where necessary in accessing these services. They must take the responsibility for developing and maintaining their skills, personal balance and values as a basis for effective and safe health care. Like other medical professional, they must take responsibility for continuously monitoring, maintaining and if necessary improving clinical aspects, services and organisation, patient safety and patient satisfaction of the care they provide.

### Note

The European definition outlines twelve characteristics of the discipline of general practice/family medicine that in turn can be subdivided into six core competencies. These are:

1. Patient care management
2. Person centred care
3. Specific problem solving skills
4. Comprehensive approach
5. Community orientation
6. Holistic modelling



For the purpose of clarity the following definitions are used to clarify what is meant by each term:

- A **characteristic** can be defined as a distinctive ability which every GP should master
- **Core** means essential to the discipline
- **Competence** relates to specific tasks that a GP should be able to perform

## **Characteristics**

The twelve characteristics of the discipline of general practice are grouped into the six core competency areas (which have been modified by the ICGP).

### **1. Patient care management**

**i)** The ability to manage primary and continuing contact with patients adhering to the principles of confidentiality and maintaining accurate patient records.

**ii)** The ability to co-ordinate care with other professionals in primary care provision, taking the advocacy position with the patient when needed. The ability to participate in teamwork and delegate tasks, where appropriate, in the general practice setting. The ability to manage change and explore its positive potential.

### **2. Person Centred Care**

**iii)** The ability to adopt a person centred approach, dealing with patients and problems with respect and dignity and develop a relationship of trust. Protection of marginalised patients should be a priority.

**iv)** The ability to develop and use the general practice consultation to produce an effective doctor patient relationship.

**v)** The ability to share with patient the decision making process and responsibility for their health. Promoting patient empowerment

**vi)** The ability to provide longitudinal continuity of care as determined by the needs of the patient while striving to maintain a person centred approach which may become more difficult in the context of changing practice models.

### **3. Specific Problem Solving Skills**

**vii)** The ability to utilise a specific decision making process informed by the clinical picture and the prevalence and incidence of illness in the community.

**viii)** The ability to diagnose and manage conditions some of which may present early in an undifferentiated way, to intervene urgently when necessary, to tolerate uncertainty and

unpredictable developments and to know when appropriate to cease investigation, which continuing to provide care.

#### **4. Comprehensive Approach**

**ix)** The ability to manage acute, chronic and rehabilitative health problems simultaneously in the same individual. GPs while maintaining their generalist skills may also which to develop special skills.

**x)** The ability to promote health and well-being by applying health promotion and disease prevention strategies appropriately. The ability to recognise that GPs have a responsibility not to medicalise normality. The ability to value the importance of their listening and supportive role.

#### **5. Community Orientation**

**xi)** The ability to manage acute, chronic and rehabilitative health problems simultaneously in the same individual. GPs while maintaining their generalist skills may also which to develop special skills.

**xi)** The ability to promote health and well-being by applying health promotion and disease prevention strategies appropriately. The ability to recognise that GPs have a responsibility not to medicalise normality. The ability to value the importance of their listening and supportive role.

#### **6. Holistic Modelling**

**xii)** The ability to use bio-psycho-social model taking into account cultural an existential dimensions. The ability to recognise the role of social, cultural, ethical, religious and family background in the determination of health. The ability to maintain and nurture one's own physical and mental well-being which leads to better patient care (recognising limitation and professional boundaries and the need to seek help when appropriate).

## 8 domains of good practice

The Medical Council has defined eight domains of good professional practice. These domains describe a framework of competencies applicable to all doctors across the continuum of professional development from formal education and training through to maintenance of professional competence.



These competencies are used to describe the outcomes which doctors should strive to achieve.



## Would general practice suit me?

There are certain characteristics and skills, which lend themselves to both enjoying and succeeding, in general practice. These include:

- An ability to tolerate clinical uncertainty; managing patients with ill-defined and unpredictable illness.
- A commitment to on-going care of patients which may involve working unsociable and long hours.
- An acceptance of patients' rights to choice and personal autonomy.
- Being able to communicate sensitively and effectively with people; putting patients before diseases – enjoying people.
- Having a degree of personal insight which will enable you to understand and recognise your own feelings and how they might influence your family at home and your patients at work.
- An ability to organise yourself and a busy practice.
- An ability to work on your own without immediate support of colleagues.
- An ability to work alongside other health care professionals.
- Recognition of the need to constantly update your clinical skills and knowledge. As of May 2011 all doctors on the medical council register are legally obliged to maintain their professional competence by enrolling in professional competence schemes and following requirements set out by the IMC. The ICGP operates a scheme for general practitioners. For more information on this please visit the ICGP website - [http://www.icgp.ie/go/pcs/cme\\_accreditation](http://www.icgp.ie/go/pcs/cme_accreditation)

The rewards for those committed to general practice are rarely financial, but involve a great personal satisfaction with helping people through life and through death, within a community setting.

## How am I trained?

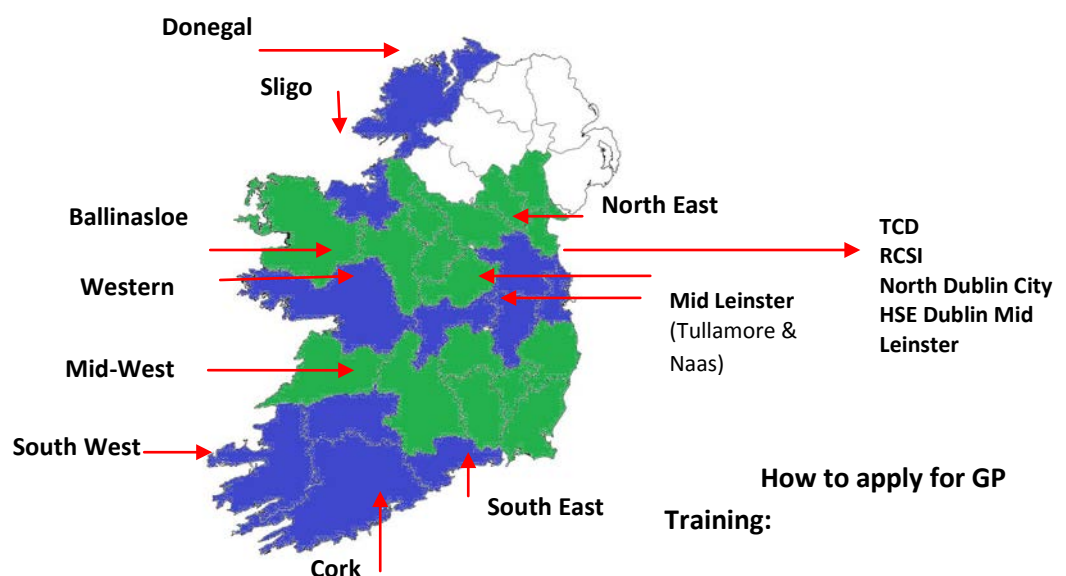
General practice training in Ireland is 4 years in duration. The first two years are predominantly spent in hospital training posts with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year in supervised general practice. Trainees must attend day release learning in their training scheme (these are held on week days depending on the training scheme). GP training follows a national curriculum and it is mandatory for trainees to complete training logs for all rotations completed.

Specialist training for general practice aims to produce doctors, who on completion of training will be able to provide personal and continuing care to individuals and families in the community. They will also have the management skills relative to primary care and be able to audit their own work with a view to improving performance.

Currently there are 14 GP training schemes in Ireland which offer 157 places per annum.

- Ballinasloe Specialist Training Scheme	4 places
- Cork Specialist Training Scheme	12 places
- Donegal Specialist Training Scheme	6 places
- HSE Dublin Mid Leinster Specialist Training Scheme	12 places
- Mid Leinster Specialist Training Scheme	20 places
- Mid-West (Limerick) Specialist Training Scheme	12 places
- North Dublin City Specialist Training Scheme	12 places
- North Eastern (Navan) Specialist Training Scheme	14 places
- RCSI Specialist Training Scheme	9 places
- Sligo Specialist Training Scheme	6 places
- South East Specialist Training Scheme	12 places
- South West Specialist Training Scheme	8 places
- TCD Specialist Training Scheme	15 places
- Western (Galway) Specialist Training Scheme	15 places

### GP training schemes in Ireland



# How to apply for GP training

## How to apply for GP training:

Application for GP training is through online application only. In December each year, a detailed application is open for a limited time period ([www.icgp.ie](http://www.icgp.ie)). Details of the open/closing dates along with interview dates etc. are made available to prospective applicants in the months leading up to the application opening.

To be eligible for GP training applicants must be eligible for entry onto the Trainee Specialist Division (TSD) of the Irish Medical Council register and fulfil the English Language Requirements. Applicants not meet these requirements will not be considered for a training place. Full details on eligibility requirements will be available on the ICGP website - [www.icgp.ie](http://www.icgp.ie).

Applicants must complete the application form by typing in the required information, in the format presented online. Applicants must select their training scheme preferences. Each scheme will be given access to the applications that they have been given as a preference.

Applications must be submitted to the College by the allocated deadline. Details of all documentation to be submitted with the online application will be available on the ICGP website.

There is an application fee of €100 which has to be submitted with the online application.

The ICGP will not accept hand-written applications or application by way of CV. Incomplete or late applications will also not be considered.

Most of the GP training schemes run open evenings so prospective applicants are encouraged to attend these as this will help in deciding scheme preference. Details of open evenings are available on the ICGP website - [http://www.icgp.ie/go/become\\_a\\_gp/training\\_programmes](http://www.icgp.ie/go/become_a_gp/training_programmes)

In addition, the ICGP run an information session on applying for GP training. This is normally held in early December in Dublin. Registration details will be available on the ICGP website.

## What happens after submission?

Applicants will receive an automated reply from the ICGP confirming receipt of the application. Once the closing date has passed the training schemes will be given access to download the applications that they have been given as a preference and they will commence the shortlisting process using the agreed national shortlisting criteria.

Applicants will be notified on the ICGP website if they are being called for interview. The training scheme administrator will provide applicants with detailed information of the interviews (time, location etc.). It is vital that applicants bring all items listed on the interview checklist to interview with them.

Training commences on the second Monday in July for all new recruits, with the exception of the trainees commencing on the Western training scheme. This scheme recruits trainees nine months in advance. A successful applicant to the Western training scheme in 2013 will not commence training until April 2014.

## MICGP Exam

All GP trainees must undergo the MIGP examination. Modules of this can be undertaken from first year in training. In total, there are four parts to the ICGP exam:

- MEQ Module: The MEQ module consists of eight questions. Each of the eight questions is marked by two examiners marking independently.
- AKT Module: The AKT module consists of 20 questions. Each question is marked independently by a single examiner.
- SBA Module: The SBA module is a computer marked examination and consists of 150 single best answer questions.
- Oral Examination Module: Each candidate is examined by four examiners. Two pairs of examiners mark independently and candidates receive the average mark from the examiner quartet.

A clinical module will be introduced in 2015 and this will replace the oral examination.

Further information on the exam is available at:

[http://www.icgp.ie/go/become\\_a\\_gp/micgp\\_examination](http://www.icgp.ie/go/become_a_gp/micgp_examination)

## What qualifications will I have at the end of training?

Trainees that successfully complete all aspects of GP training and pass all modules of the ICGP exam automatically become members of the ICGP. Doctors elected to membership through this route are eligible to apply to the Medical Council for a Certificate of Specific Training/Acquired Rights in General Medical Practice – (CSTAR) issued under EU Directive 2005/36/EC and for entry onto the Specialist Register (SDR) of the IMC.

In Ireland, as well as through the EU (and EEA), the recognised form of certification of completion of training in general practice is Certificate of Specific Training/Acquired Rights in General Medical Practice (CSTAR)– issued under EU Directive 2005/36/EC. This allows doctors to work within all state schemes both in Ireland and in each EEA country. The competent authority in each EEA country issues CSTAR. In Ireland, the competent authority under the directive is the Medical Council.

In addition, the ICGP have reciprocal recognition of training with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

## Useful contacts

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Cork GP Specialist Training Scheme  
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Donegal GP Specialist Training Scheme  
Dir: Dr. Paul Stewart  
E-mail: [Kathleen.langan@hse.ie](mailto:Kathleen.langan@hse.ie)  
Tel: 074 9188897

HSE Dublin Mid Leinster GP Specialist Training Scheme  
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Tel: 01 716626

Mid Leinster GP Specialist Training Scheme  
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Mid-West GP Specialist Training Scheme  
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Tel: 061 213485

North Eastern GP Specialist Training scheme  
Dir: Dr. Owen Clarke  
E-mail: [gptraining@hse.ie](mailto:gptraining@hse.ie)  
Tel: 046 9076460

North Dublin City GP Specialist Training Scheme  
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RCSI GP Specialist Training Scheme  
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