



8 March 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

GP registrars should not have to provide medical care to colleagues and practice staff

General Practice Registrars Australia (GPR Australia) has today released a position statement regarding GP registrars providing medical care to practice staff.

“GP registrars should not have to provide clinical consultation services or provide medical care to practice staff or others who they work with, or the immediate family of these professional colleagues,” said GPR Australia President Dr Sama Balasubramanian.

“This issue is, unfortunately, a grey area for many GP registrars, despite substantial research confirming the conflict of interest for medical practitioners when treating work colleagues,” he said.

“GPR Australia’s position statement encourages a positive practice culture and role modelling and practising of good professional behaviour, in line with the Medical Board of Australia’s Code of Conduct,” he said.

“There should, however, be some exceptions in emergency medical situations,” he said.

“When there is no possible option for a practice staff member, or their immediate family member, to see another more senior GP or another appropriate health care provider, either at the same practice or at a different location (as may arise in remote rural communities), then the practice should have protocols in place to deal with this situation,” said Dr Balasubramanian.

“The 2017 GPRA Benchmarking Survey of GP registrars found that 85 per cent of respondents had been required to see other practice staff and/or family members of practice staff during their GP training,” he said.

“Nearly one half of those registrar respondents indicated that treating practice staff or their family members had been a stressful experience,” he said.

“GP registrars are particularly vulnerable in general practice. They may struggle to negotiate professional boundaries and/or may feel unable to refuse to provide care because of the power dynamics, if they are asked or expected to provide care to staff members and immediate family of staff members,” he said.

“GPRA encourages practices to clarify their position on this matter and to put in place policies which protect and support GP registrars as well as ensuring the safety of patients,” said Dr Balasubramanian.

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[Read the full position statement here.](#)

<https://gpra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/GPRA-Statement-S02-Registrars-treating-Practice-Staff.pdf>