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Cancelled exams – GP trainees deserve much better

General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA) is acutely aware of the feelings of devastation and absolute dismay of all exam candidates as a consequence of the last-minute cancellation of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) online Key Feature Problem (KFP) and Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) on Friday and Saturday. As such, GPRA is calling on the RACGP to respond quickly, decisively and with upmost compassion to all affected trainees.

“GPRA calls on the RACGP to do everything possible to make meaningful reparations and restore confidence amongst, and show respect for, its future Fellow GPs. Accountability and transparency are necessary to seek some form of resolution. The process to achieve this must be trainee-informed and trainee-focused,” says GPRA President Dr Sama Balasubramanian.

“GPRA has been fielding calls and emails from despairing trainees all weekend. We recognise that technical failures with an external contractor appear to be the key factor in the decision to cancel both exams and, while College staff have done their very best to resolve these issues, the RACGP must ultimately take responsibility,” Dr Balasubramanian says.

“Firstly, the College must offer recompense to candidates. This should be both financial, in terms of substantial exams fees and other expenses incurred by trainees in preparing for this failed online exam, and also ensure upmost flexibility and fairness in relation to eligibility, timeline and requirements for these candidates to sit future written and clinical exams,” Dr Balasubramanian says.

“Secondly, there must be a forensic review into the events, process and decisions leading up to and, in particular, what happened on the KFP exam day. The review should be

open, independent, transparent and undergone as a high priority. The exam candidates, and the GP training sector, deserve answers. With the RACGP's online Remote Clinical Exam (RCE) scheduled for the end of October, trainees must have full confidence that the failings that occurred with the KFP will not be repeated with the clinical exam," Dr Balasubramanian says.

"Lastly, direct input from trainees and trainee representatives, including GPRA, must be sought by the College as it conducts this review. Terms of Reference should be signed off by trainees as they are the ones most affected by this experience. Candidates deserve to know that the College is accountable, and this will not happen again," Dr Balasubramanian says.

"The psychological trauma, heightened anxiety and uncertainty now being experienced by an already highly stressed trainee group must not be overlooked or underestimated. The vicarious trauma of trainees, their supervisors and their practices must be addressed in meaningful ways. Ultimately, the lived experience of trainees who endured this circumstance must be front and centre in informing the College's response. This response must be communicated in a transparent and respectful fashion," Dr Balasubramanian says.

"There is a growing feeling amongst GP trainees that the RACGP does not care about its GPs in training. The events of the past few days have galvanised these views, especially for those affected exam candidates. The disenfranchisement of a cohort of trainees is not healthy for our profession," Dr Balasubramanian says.

"GPRA will continue to advocate on behalf of GP trainees to the RACGP and other stakeholders to make sure this happens," Dr Balasubramanian says.

ENDS

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