

## Medical Students – Tomorrow's GPs

You might have been asked whether you'd mind if a medical student sits in on your consultation. Most patients don't mind and the experience is very valuable to the students. Sometimes patients just want to speak to their GP and we ALWAYS respect this. There will NEVER be any pressure for you to have a student sitting in. However, if you are happy for the student to sit in and assist, you are making a real contribution to training tomorrow's doctors and students really do appreciate it.

At the moment there are not enough GPs entering the profession to cope with the growing workload. To help with this, the government is increasing the number of medical students and wants 50% of all graduates to go on to become GPs. At the moment only 25% of doctors, who qualify after their initial 5 years of medical training, go on to become GPs.

Throughout their 5 years of medical training students have various placements in hospitals, community settings and GP surgeries. All the evidence shows that students who have substantial and positive experiences in GP surgeries, are much more likely to continue with the five years of further training it takes to become a GP. So if you want more GPs you need to have more GP placements available. So with more students entering medical school and then spending more time in GP surgeries, patients are going to see more students working with their GP.

It is much to the University of Exeter's credit that they will soon be training an additional 88 medical students each year, on top of the 130 who currently start each year. Almost all UK medical schools successfully bid for additional students, but Exeter is one of only 12 to have received additional numbers, over and above their standard allocation.

To cope with the extra students we will have to be imaginative in the teaching experiences we offer. Students will often be working in pairs, supporting each other in their training. We may also explore the idea of 'Expert Patients'. These are individuals who are knowledgeable about their (often long-term) conditions and who can work with a group of students, teaching them a lot about their symptoms, treatment and how they manage their illness.

The chances are that over the coming years you'll be asked again if a student can sit in, perhaps take your medical history or carry out basic examinations. You can ALWAYS say no, but if you say yes you really cannot underestimate the contribution you are making to that student's education. When students finish a placement with us they provide feedback. I am pleased to say that such feedback is always very positive. Furthermore students often reflect that the most valuable thing they have done in the Practice is to actually spend time with patients.