**Background**

General practice is committed to providing whole person care (WPC). However, this lacks a clear consensus definition. This is required to facilitate research upon and provision of WPC.

**Aims**

To determine how general practitioners understand WPC, and whether this is synonymous with ‘biopsychosocial’ and ‘holistic’ care.

**Method**

We performed a systematic review of general practice literature defining whole person, biopsychosocial and/or holistic care or describing its key features. Eight databases were searched with an unlimited date range. Articles were critically appraised and data was extracted and analysed using thematic synthesis.

**Results**

This research was conducted as part of the RACGP Academic Post program, 2017. 50 studies were included from 4297 non-duplicate records screened. There was heterogeneity among included literature. Six overarching themes were identified: a multidimensional integrated approach; the importance of the therapeutic relationship; acknowledging the doctor’s humanity; recognising patients’ individual personhood; viewing health as a state of wholeness and balance; and using a range of treatment modalities. Whole person, holistic and biopsychosocial terminology shared an emphasis upon a multidimensional integrated approach. However, their inclusion of other themes varied, with biopsychosocial being overall the narrowest and holistic the broadest of the terms.

**Conclusion**

General practice literature suggests that GPs understand WPC to encompass multiple dimensions of health. The understanding of WPC expressed in the literature addresses the health of the individual patient, the community, and the GP, and has important implications for designing health systems that promote a healthy nation, for example health care homes.