Potential for Paramedic Roles in Irish General Practice: A Qualitative Stakeholder Study

Introduction

Irish health policy emphasises the role of Primary Care and General Practice. However, there is a growing shortage of General Practitioners in Ireland. Paramedics have traditionally focused on emergency care in the community. More recently Paramedics have taken on roles in General Practice in some jurisdictions, but not yet in Ireland.

Aim

To explore key stakeholder perceptions of ‘the potential for Paramedic roles in Irish General Practice’

Methods

An exploratory, qualitative stakeholder consultation study incorporating in-depth semi structured telephone interviews followed by thematic analysis. Interviews were conducted with a total of eighteen participants that included six senior Paramedics (Advanced Paramedics), seven General Practitioners, three Practice Nurses and two Practice Managers.

Results

Participants in this study expressed polarized views on the potential for Paramedic roles in Irish General Practice. Senior Paramedics were enthusiastic, highlighting opportunity for professional development and favourable working conditions. GP’s, Practice Nurses and Managers were more circumspect and had concerns that Paramedic scope and skill set was not aligned to general practice care. GP’s, Practice Nurses and Managers emphasized a greater role for expanded General Practice Nursing in the first instance. There were varied perceptions on what the potential role might entail but consensus that Government financial support would be required.

Discussion

Findings are preliminary but can inform future development of novel roles in Irish General Practice.