

Participant Information Leaflet

Study title: GP Retention (GP-R) project

Principal investigator:

Dr. Niamh Humphries

Senior Lecturer

087 981 6953

Researcher

Dr. Holly Hanlon

Postdoctoral Researcher

0852857977

Data Controller:

Dr. Niamh Humphries

Data Controller Contact Details:

nhumphries@rcsi.ie

087 981 6953

You are being invited to take part in a research study to be carried out by the GP-R research team based in RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management (RCSI GSM).

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, you should read the information provided below carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with your family, friends. Take time to ask us any questions – don't feel rushed and don't feel under pressure to make a quick decision.

You should clearly understand the risks and benefits of taking part in this study so that you can make a decision that is right for you. This process is known as 'Informed Consent'.

You don't have to take part in this study. If you decide not to take part that is fine. You can change your mind about taking part in the study any time you like. Even if the study has started, you can still opt out. You don't have to give us a reason.

Why is this study being done?

We are a research team based in RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management (RCSI GSM), working on a project on GP Retention.

Previous research by members of our team of researchers based in RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management on the Hospital Doctor Retention and Motivation (HDRM) project 2018-2023 has demonstrated that working conditions are an important issue for hospital doctors in Ireland and are critical to doctor retention. The findings of the HDRM project have been published in numerous journal articles [1-5], covered in media [6,7] as well as presented directly to key policymakers [8].

We now wish to move our focus beyond the hospital to learn more about the work experiences of general practitioners, with the GP Retention (GP-R) project. We want to find out more about the everyday working experiences of general practitioners in 2024 and to understand what additional supports might be needed to improve doctor wellbeing and doctor retention.

Who is organising and funding this study?

The GP Retention (GP-R) project is funded by a Health Research Board (HRB) Applied Partnership Award in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) and is led by Dr Niamh Humphries. The research team (Dr Niamh Humphries, Principal Investigator, and Dr Holly Hanlon, Postdoctoral Researcher) are based in RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management.

Why am I being asked to take part?

We hope to recruit approximately 20 GPs in Ireland in 2024, and approximately 10 Irish GPs abroad in 2025 to take part in this research. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a general practitioner working in Ireland and we believe you will help us to understand how general practitioners in Ireland work. Alternatively, you may have been asked to take part in this study because you are an Irish-trained doctor working as a general practitioner abroad, and we believe you will help us to understand why some Irish GPs choose to emigrate and work abroad.

How will the study be carried out?

Traditional ethnography involves the researcher spending time alongside the people they want to research, observing them, speaking with them and taking detailed field notes about their everyday experiences. It enables the researcher to see 'what actually happens in the setting (work done rather than work as imagined)' [13]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to conduct ethnography in-person. As a result, we developed a new method of remote ethnography or mobile instant messaging ethnography (MIME) which used mobile instant messaging and Zoom to connect with hospital doctors [11, 12], as a part of the HDRM project.

We would like to conduct a remote ethnography with general practitioners. This will involve the following activities during the study:

- (1) Consent: A GP-R researcher (Dr. Holly Hanlon) will speak to each doctor (via phone or Zoom) to explain the project, what participation involves and obtain their consent to participate in the project.
- (2) Interview: Each doctor will be invited to participate in a short qualitative interview with the GP-R researcher (Dr. Holly Hanlon) which will focus on their working lives/working days. At this point we will also explain the WhatsApp component of the study.
- (3) MIME: Over a period of 8 weeks, the GP-R researcher (Dr. Holly Hanlon) will connect with each doctor by sending them 2-3 Threema messages per week. Threema is an app similar to WhatsApp which can be used anonymously. Each message sent will ask the doctor to reflect on an aspect of their working day and will invite them to reply (when they can) via Threema. This 'conversation' between GP-R researcher and participant will continue for approximately 8 weeks. Please note that responses do not have to be immediate. You should respond to the messages whenever you find time. If there's anything additional you would like to add, just send us a message.
- (4) Interview: finally, participating doctors will be invited to take part in a final interview (via phone or Zoom) with the GP-R researcher (Dr. Holly Hanlon) to discuss some of the issues that have arisen during the Threema conversation and inviting them to reflect again on their working lives and any other issues that have arisen.

What will happen to me if I agree to take part?

For those doctors who opt to take part in this phase of the GP-R research project, they will take part in four main components:

- (1) A short online meeting where we explain the study to you and obtain your consent to participate.
- (2) A short online interview (approx. 30 mins) via zoom/phone where we get to know more about you and your experience of working as a general practitioner.
- (3) Mobile Instant Messaging Ethnography (MIME): A Threema conversation about your work with a GP-R researcher which will involve 2-3 messages per week over a period of 8 weeks. You will be sent an invitation link to participate in the Threema conversation.
- (4) A final online interview (approx. 60 mins) via zoom/phone where you're invited to discuss your experiences of work more generally and to reflect on the Threema conversation.

Video/and or Audio recordings?

All of the information you share with us (via Threema or in the interview on Zoom) will be treated in the strictest confidence. The information will be transcribed into one document (a transcript), which you will be invited to review and/or amend prior to analysis.

If you share any images via Threema, these will be included in the transcript, any audio or video notes will be transcribed. The transcript will also be anonymized, i.e. any identifying information about you will be removed. In the transcript you will be referred to as Respondent XX and your workplace as Workplace YY.

Also, you will have the opportunity to review, edit, or erase any audio or video recording to which they have contributed during the project.

Threema offer end-to-end encryption for their services. End-to-end encryption means that your calls, messages, media within messages including content like images, audio, video, documents and files are encrypted to protect against third parties (including Threema) from seeing that content. The communication will be one-to-one communication between you and a member of the research team. You will be communicating with a member of the research team who is using a specific, secure research phone, rather than via the researcher's personal phone number. Threema does not require a mobile phone number or email address to be linked to your account.

What are the benefits?

With your help, this study will enable us to generate insights into the working lives of general practitioners in Ireland and abroad. We will disseminate the research findings widely via presentations, journal articles and meetings with policy makers, we will use the information generated by the GP-R project to inform policy change.

What are the risks?

As a participant, you may become distressed when prompted to recall particular experiences. While we will take all precautions to minimise those risks, it is possible that you might become upset as a result of your participation in the research. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time. And, you can wish to access counselling services without needing to contact the researchers.

If you are affected by any of the issues raised during this research, the following organisations and policies may be able to provide help and advice.

The HSE Employee Assistance and Counselling Service (EACS) provides a free and confidential counselling support and a referral service for all staff with personal or work-related difficulties: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/employee-assistance-programme-staff-counselling/>

Any doctor in Ireland who has a concern about stress, burnout, mental health difficulties or who may have an alcohol or drug misuse problem can receive confidential help from experts at the Practitioner Health Matters Programme <https://practitionerhealth.ie>

Is the study confidential?

We want to reassure you that all identifying details (names, work sites, hospital names, etc.) will be removed from your interviews, Threema transcripts before they are analysed. In our papers, you will be known only by your respondent number, as 'respondent x'. Also, you will

have an opportunity to review and amend the transcript of your interview and messages at the end of data collection.

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1. We will use the data you share with us to better understand how general practitioners work in Ireland and to help policy makers to better understand the everyday work experiences of general practitioners in Ireland.
2. One of the seven major data processing principles of GDPR is to ensure that personal data is processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently. To comply with this principle, Chapter 6 of the GDPR requires any organization processing personal data to have a valid legal basis for that personal data processing activity. The legal basis for processing the personal data in our research project is Article 9(2)(a) your consent and Article 9(2)(j) Scientific research purposes.
3. The project research team (Dr. Niamh Humphries and Dr. Holly Hanlon) will have access to participants' data.
4. The data will be stored in our project database for 2 years after the project ends in February 2024.
5. You have the right to withdraw consent to your personal data being used in this project. You will be able to do this by contacting Dr. Niamh Humphries at nhumphries@rcsi.ie or Dr. Holly Hanlon at hollyhanlon@rcsi.ie.
6. You have a right to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Commissioner by contacting 01 765 0100, or 1800 437 737, or visiting Data Protection Commission's website at <https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/contact/how-contact-us>.
7. You have a right to request access to your data and a copy of it by contacting Dr. Niamh Humphries at nhumphries@rcsi.ie or Dr. Holly Hanlon at hollyhanlon@rcsi.ie.
8. You have a right to restrict or object to your data processing.
9. You have a right to have any inaccurate information about yourself corrected or deleted.
10. You have a right to have your personal data deleted.
11. You have a right to data portability, meaning you have a right to move your data from one controller to another in a readable format.
12. There will not be automated decision making, including profiling.
13. You have a right to object to automated processing including profiling if you wish.
14. We will inform you when we intend to further process your personal data and provide you with information on that other purpose.
15. If we wish to transfer your data to a country outside of the EU or an international organisation, we will put in place appropriate security measures to prevent your personal data from being accidentally lost, used or accessed in an unauthorised way, altered or disclosed.

Consent to Future Uses

You have only given permission for your data to be used for the current research and, now we are seeking permission to store the data for possible future uses in research. This will be only the current project members' research, not someone else's research. In the future, your data will be further explored for manuscripts or conference presentations.

If you are consenting to **future research related to the current study**, your data will be processed for similar research studies in the field of general practitioners.

If you are consenting to **future research unrelated to the current study**, your data will be processed in studies within the field of healthcare, and recognised ethical standards for scientific research will be maintained.

Where can I get further information?

If you have any further questions about the study or if you want to opt out of the study, you can do so at any time. If you need any further information about the research now or at any time in the future, please contact:

Dr. Niamh Humpries – Principal Investigator GP-R project
RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management
nhumphries@rcsi.ie

Dr. Holly Hanlon – Postdoctoral Researcher GP-R project
RCSI Graduate School of Healthcare Management
hollyhanlon@rcsi.ie