Title: Who does GP work experience, and does it make them want to be a GP? A research protocol utilising data from the UK Medical Applicant Cohort Study

Problem: Recruitment into general practice is of national importance. The Wass Report in 2016 recommended that access to work experience for prospective medical students be improved. Using questionnaire data from a large cohort study of people interested in studying medicine, we plan to determine whether exposure to GP work experience is associated with an interest in choosing GP as a career, and which characteristics of applicants, such as their personality traits, their socioeconomic status and their social capital, are associated with access to GP work experience opportunities.

Approach: This study will use data from Wave 1 of the UK Medical Admissions Cohort (UKMACS). All UK-based registrants in the 2019 sitting of the University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT), an admissions test required by most British medical schools, were invited to complete a 46-item questionnaire. This includes items grading enthusiasm for GP as a future career, listing GP work experience, indicators of Big Five personality traits, and markers of social and economic capital such as parental occupation, type of school (state comprehensive, state selective, fee-paying) and the number of people studying medicine known personally to the respondents.

Our analysis will use quantitative methodology to determine the associations and statistical relationships between these factors, exposure, and interest in GP careers.

Findings: 5306 respondents, for whom medicine would be their first degree, completed the survey. Coding is ongoing for respondents’ self reported work experience; this is projected to be completed by February 2020 with final analysis of results available by May 2020.

Implications: This study will provide valuable evidence about the value of general practice work experience placements in encouraging prospective doctors to choose GP at a career. It will also demonstrate which groups are less likely to have had GP experience before medical school, providing insights into which groups of applicants are underrepresented and potentially find it difficult to obtain that experience.

The implications of these findings will be significant for local, regional and national policy making around availability and access to work experience placements in GP.

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Disclosure of Interest: Katherine Woolf is funded by a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Career Development Fellowship (grant reference CDF-2017-10-008) for this research project. This poster presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.