

# 'Rural WONCA' and 'C-LIC'

## – a great match for Limerick 2022

**The Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships system plays a key role in active general practice learning, writes Andrew O'Regan**

AS PREPARATIONS FOR the 2022 WONCA World Rural Health conference or 'Rural WONCA' as it is affectionately known, continue in Limerick, an exciting development for the conference is the integration of a major international medical education conference – the annual meeting of the Consortium of Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships (C-LIC), into the event. The vision and values of Rural WONCA and C-LIC have much in common.

### What is meant by LIC?

Longitudinal integrated clerkships (LICs) are student placements that run for a minimum of eight weeks and generally, though not exclusively, are hosted in general practice. C-LIC is an international network of medical schools that have LICs as a core element of the medical curriculum; many are in rural and remote areas.

### The experience at University of Limerick School of Medicine LIC

The University of Limerick School of Medicine (ULSOM) was established in 2007 and, two years later, the first cohort of 32 students went on an 18-week LIC in general practice. The school's affiliation with a dynamic body of GPs – the University of Limerick Education and Research Network in General Practice (ULEARN-GP) – has been critical to the success of its medical education and research.<sup>1</sup>

Under the C-LIC system, medical students are placed in practices across six geographic hubs; initially they learn by observation and 'sitting in' and, after a couple of weeks, they begin 'parallel consulting'. In this way, a student consults with a patient (assigned by the GP), while the GP sees a patient separately, and afterwards the student presents his/her case to the GP who will then review the patient and discuss the management plan with the student. This active learning helps students to develop consultation skills and to learn from patients, while under the close supervision of their tutors. Students consult with four to six patients per day, accumulating up to 400 patient contacts during the 18-week placement.

The theoretical underpinning of LICs will be familiar to readers involved in general practice training. A key concept is transformative learning, whereby students become more proactive in their role within the practice, grow in understanding and come to see themselves as doctors (in training), all of which is facilitated by continuity and time, as well as the supervision and support of GP tutors. As the placement progresses, so too does the role of the student in the practice and in patient care; most get experience in phlebotomy, venesections and other daily tasks.

Also relevant is the theory of symbiosis, where benefits confer to students, tutors and patients/community; this 'tide raising all boats' has been the subject of research conducted in Limerick.<sup>2</sup>



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### Research

Recently, students from ULSOM with colleagues from the US and the UK, took part in a mixed-methods study at various timepoints on their LIC.<sup>3</sup> The research highlighted continuity as the cornerstone of learning. Across the four medical schools and three countries, the findings were the same: as students progressed through their placement, they saw themselves more as advocates for patients and took on more ownership and responsibility for patient care.

Separately, ULEARN-GP tutors were interviewed about their experience with the LIC; the research concluded: "LICs have the potential to develop more patient-centred future doctors, who have a greater understanding of how medicine is practised in the community".<sup>4</sup> This finding is borne out in practice, with 43% of the ULSOM alumni choosing a career in general practice<sup>5</sup> which is comparable with the best performing medical schools in this regard in the UK.<sup>6</sup> In the context of health systems struggling to recruit and retain a general practice workforce, LICs can be an effective part of the strategy to improve recruitment and retention for the general practice workforce.

This will be a core theme of a linked keynote at Rural WONCA given by Prof Roger Strasser, who has global expertise in addressing healthcare workforce recruitment and retention, particularly in remote areas. His research advances the case for medical students undertaking clinical education in community clinical settings supervised by GP models, and demonstrates healthcare benefits for everyone, achieved by community engagement in medical education.

### Conclusion

I very much look forward to Rural WONCA 2022, the theme of which is "improving health, empowering communities". The addition of the annual conference of the C-LICs and the C-LIC experience will be an interesting and unique contribution to the conversation, in particular involving the perspectives of our ULEARN-GP tutors and all those involved in medical education. We look forward to June in Limerick and hope to see many of you there. [i](#)

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References on request