

# FAQ

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

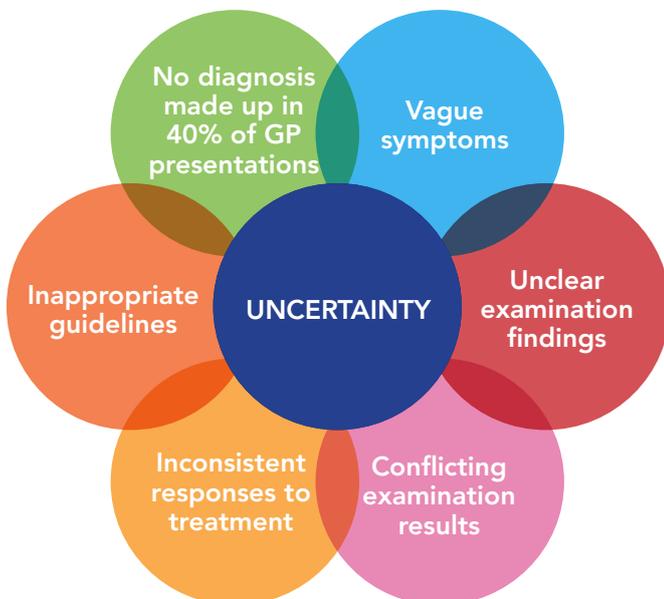


PODCAST WEBINAR

## 'It could be anything' Helping Your Registrar Manage Uncertainty

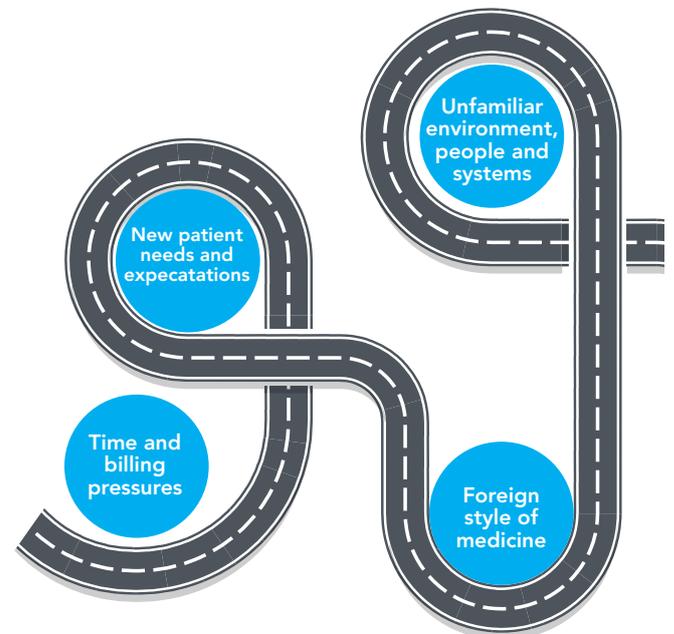
How does uncertainty manifest in general practice?

FIGURE 1: UNCERTAINTY IN GENERAL PRACTICE



What is meant by the registrar's "uncertain" journey?

FIGURE 2: THE REGISTRAR'S "UNCERTAIN" JOURNEY



*"There are many consultations where there are no straight answers, no clear diagnosis and no obvious treatment, where guidelines and decision-making protocols do not lead to a satisfactory outcome... at one extreme the doctor who believes in their own infallibility when faced with diagnostic decisions can be a source of danger, as can the doctor at the other extreme who struggles with indecision on a daily basis."*

(O'Riordan M, et al. 2011)

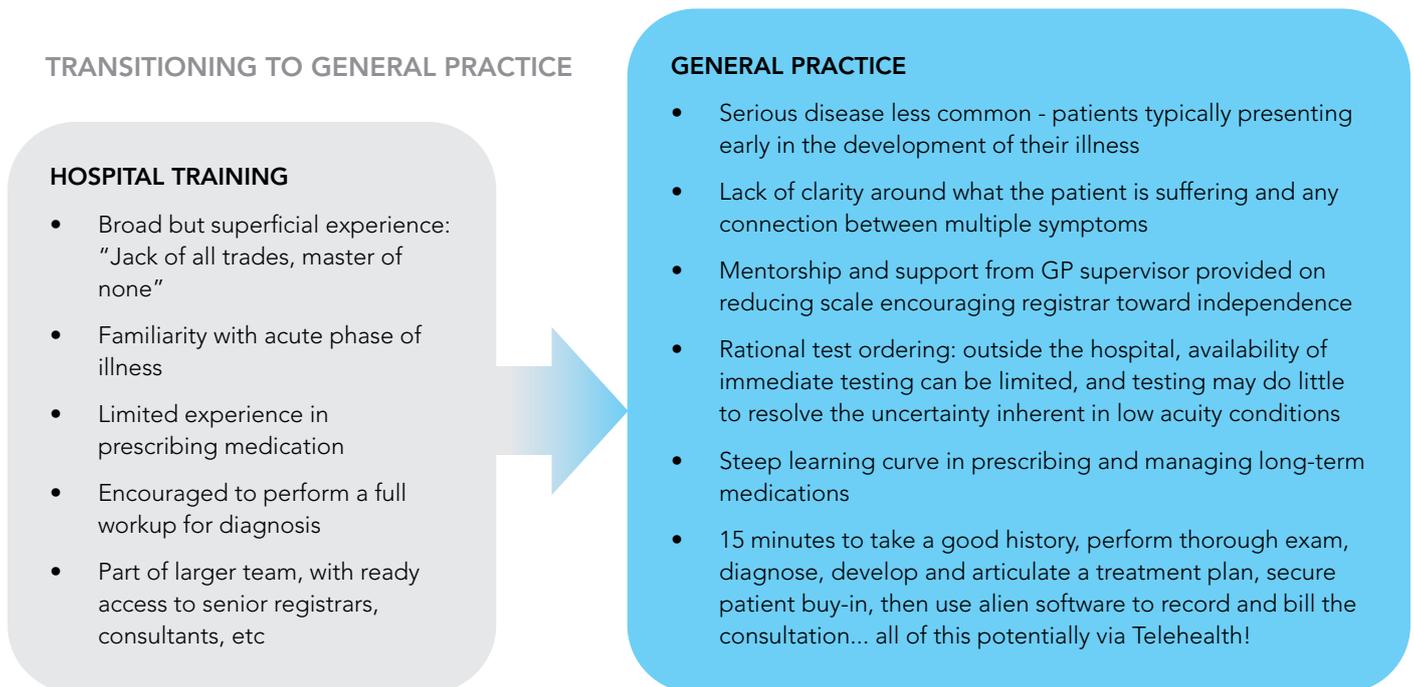
The registrar who has come directly from the hospital training environment has typically had little exposure to the undifferentiated and unorganised problems that render managing uncertainty as arguably the core skill of the GP.

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### What is meant by the registrar's "uncertain" journey?

**FIGURE 3: UNCERTAINTY IN THE TRANSITION TO GENERAL PRACTICE**



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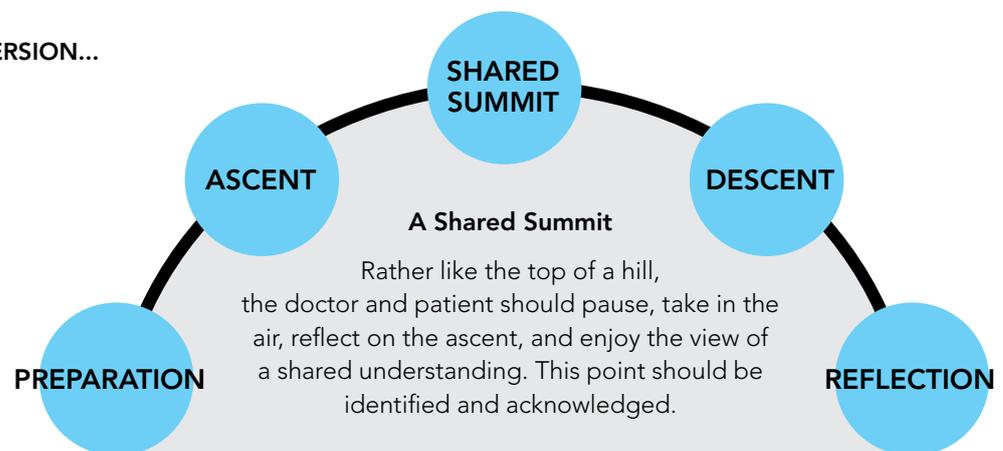
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### Why should I give focus to uncertainty while I'm supervising my registrar?

Dealing with uncertainty is now considered a learned skill and a core competency of the RACGP and ACRRM curriculum embedded into the registrar's exam.

More than this, the potential impact of uncertainty on the registrar - and their subsequent ability to establish/ maintain trust in their patient relationships - makes the development of the skills needed to manage this defining feature of general practice a crucial part of the supervising role.

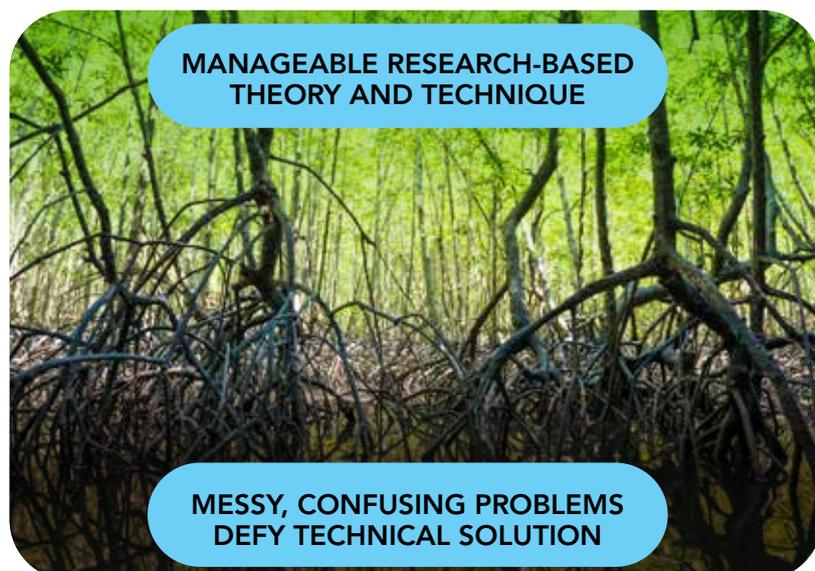
**FIGURE 4: THE TEXT BOOK VERSION...  
THE "CONSULTATION HILL"**



**FIGURE 4: THE REALITY**

'In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution.'

*(Donald Schön, 1987)*



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### How can I tell if my registrar is struggling with anxiety?

- Long consultations and few patients
- Non-rational test ordering
- Non-rational prescribing
- Frequently seeking help and assurance from GP supervisor
- Professionalism issues
  - Lateness
  - Tiredness
  - Sick leave
  - Closed door

### How can I assess my registrar's tolerance of uncertainty?

- ASK THEM!
- Use formative assessment
  - Direct observation
  - Random case analysis
  - Problem case discussion
- Check what tests they are ordering

### How can I help my registrar with uncertainty in their consultations?

- Incorporate management of uncertainty into your teaching
  - Foster tolerance of uncertainty
  - Use consultation analysis
- Develop clinical reasoning and decision-making skills
- Use role modelling
- Support evidence-based practice

### What strategies can I teach (and use) for managing uncertainty?

- Share decision-making
- Identify the patient's agenda
  - Ideas – Concerns – Expectations ("I.C.E")
- Follow up and safety net
- Reason analytically
  - Murtagh's diagnostic framework
  - Diagnostic pause
  - Gut feelings
  - Test of time
- Seek evidence and assistance
- Accept that uncertainty is inevitable
- Gather sufficient data



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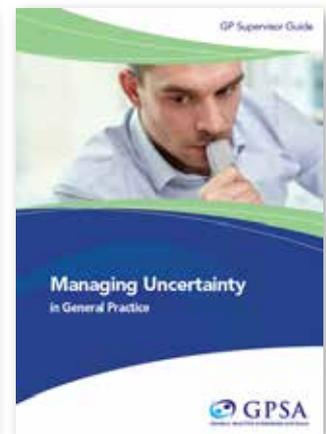
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### Resources



All GPSA resources are available [here](#)

- GPSA Teaching Plan: Managing Uncertainty - <https://gpsupervisorsaustralia.org.au/download/11978/>
- GPSA Guide: Managing Uncertainty in General Practice - <https://gpsupervisorsaustralia.org.au/download/2167/>



### References

O’Riordan M, et al. ‘Dealing with uncertainty in general practice: an essential skill for the general practitioner’. *Qual Prim Care* 2011;19:175–81 <https://primarycare.imedpub.com/dealing-with-uncertainty-in-general-practice-an-essential-skill-for-the-general-practitioner.pdf>

Primary Care Knowledge Boost Podcast: *Dealing with uncertainty* <https://www.pckb.org/e/dealing-with-uncertainty-1602494023/>

Schon DA. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. Jossey-Bass Inc Publishers; 1987.