

# The self-reported learning needs of primary care doctors in South Africa: a descriptive survey

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**Abstract** (Full text available online at [www.tandfonline.com/ojfp](http://www.tandfonline.com/ojfp))

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**Background:** Strengthening primary health care in South Africa is a prerequisite for the successful introduction of National Health Insurance. Primary care doctors from both the public and private sectors are an essential contributor to achieving this goal. In order to prepare these doctors for their future role, a national diploma training programme is being developed. This study aimed to evaluate the learning needs of primary care doctors and to assist with the design of the diploma.

**Methods:** A descriptive survey of 170 primary care doctors (80 medical officers and 90 private practitioners), from eight provinces in South Africa, in terms of their use of 30 key guidelines, performance of 85 clinical skills and confidence in 12 different roles.

**Results:** Doctors had read the majority of the guidelines (20/30), but few had been implemented in practice (6/30). All of the doctors had been trained in the clinical skills; however, none had taught these skills to others in the last year. Primary care doctors reported having performed the majority of the skills within the last year (70/85). Doctors had performed 7/12 roles in the last year, while 5/12 had not been engaged with. The weakest roles were those of change agent and community advocate, while the strongest roles were competent clinician, capability builder and collaborator. There were a number of significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the learning needs of medical officers and private practitioners.

**Conclusion:** These findings will help guide the development of a new Diploma in Family Medicine programme for South Africa.

**Keywords:** clinical skills, descriptive survey, family medicine, guidelines, learning needs, primary care, scope of practice, South Africa