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The Rotating Paramedic: An Evaluation of a Rotational Model of Working Within Unplanned Urgent and Emergency Health Care

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Health Education England funded a programme of work to develop an effective and sustainable work model to maximise the contribution of paramedics rotating through a variety of settings including: frontline ambulance work, general practice, and emergency operation/dispatch centres. This presentation focuses on the qualitative component of the evaluation of this pilot model. Thirty individual interviews involving a variety of health-care professionals, including paramedics, were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded thematically looking for emergent similarities/differences. Key emergent themes include: improved continual professional development for paramedics; increased collaborative, interprofessional working; improved job satisfaction and subsequent paramedic retention; challenges to clinical governance; complexities of funding; and demand for flexible models of rotational working according to local health-care demand. It was evident that there was an appetite for a rotational model both from paramedics and other health-care professionals. This study reports improved working relationships with greater interprofessional understanding of paramedics' capabilities. Length of rotation in each component is not straightforward. Longer rotations, particularly in primary care support learning and relationship building, but shorter rotations increase variety and better support shift rota patterns. Paramedics are keen to continue working within ambulance services but also want to utilize extended skills and expertise in alternative settings. Similar problems are being reported globally. The rotational model has potential to reverse some of the failings of the past where specialist paramedics in ambulance services were not used to their full potential resulting in them leaving the profession and depleting a workforce that is already in short supply.