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“A wonderful job”

Young doctor Gabriela Rohrer took over an old GP practice in a rural area in the canton of Lucerne. She tells us how she ended up there and what she likes about her job.



Gabriela Rohrer represents the new generation of young GPs.
Photo: Danielle Liniger

INTERVIEW: SUSANNE WENGER

“Swiss Review”: Ms Rohrer, why did a young doctor like you decide to take over a GP practice in a rural area?

Gabriela Rohrer: It was the same question for me, but the other way around. Why work in an urban area? I’m not a city girl. The countryside around Entlebuch is stunning – and I love the outdoors. I couldn’t be happier here. And the life of a country doctor is really interesting.

What is so interesting about it?

GPs in rural areas deal with the full medical A to Z. In urban areas, children go to the paediatrician and women see the gynaecologist. And if you break your wrist, you go to the accident and emergency department. We don’t have any of this. I’m the first port of call for all health issues.

Your predecessor was the village doctor for decades. How did you become his successor?

The village community were determined to keep their GP practice. High investment costs are a common obstacle for young doctors. This is why a co-operative was founded in which the municipality and many local people bought a stake. The cooperative purchased the property in which the GP practice is a tenant. My partner and I own the company that runs the practice. The other two doctors who work at the practice are our employees. It sounds complicated, I know. But the main thing is that it works.

What do you do differently to the traditional family doctor that everyone used to know and love in Switzerland?

I have great respect for what GPs did in the past. My predecessor left his mark on so many families. He accompanied people throughout their lives

– through the good times and the bad. For many, he was just a constant fixture. I also like to build long-term relationships with my patients. Nevertheless, we have changed certain things. We have added a bit more structure to the running of the practice and have tried to be clearer in letting people know about when we are available. It is important for me to have downtime – to know that I can have an afternoon off or an uninterrupted night’s sleep, for example.

You are Chairwoman of the Swiss Young General Practitioners Association. Why is the GP profession starting to appeal to young people again?

It has always been an attractive profession. Family medicine is wonderful. There are other reasons why young people turned their backs on it for a while. We failed to develop the next generation. There was barely any liaison between universities and GP practices. Policymakers made life difficult for GPs. Quite a bit has changed since then. Primary care has taken on a whole new meaning at the political level, and a great deal has improved in the area of training. GPs themselves also realised that they had to work hard to revamp their image. Our enthusiasm has rubbed off on young people. We need a concerted effort to reap the benefits. All the red tape in our job can be scary. You would not believe how many forms I have to fill in! I would rather devote the time to patients.

Gabriela Rohrer, Specialist in General Internal Medicine FMH, has headed the GP practice in Flühli (municipality of Flühli/Sörenberg in the canton of Lucerne) since the beginning of 2018. She is 35 years old and comes from the Berne region.