

Knowledge And Choice Of Medical Undergraduates In Pursuing Post Graduates And Super Speciality: An Original Research

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study is to investigate the knowledge and choice of medical undergraduates in pursuing postgraduates and super speciality programs, and to identify the factors that influence their decision-making. The study will also investigate the relationship between the quality of undergraduate education, mentorship and guidance, personal preferences and career goals, and the decision to pursue postgraduate or super specialty programs.

Methodology: This is a cross-sectional, observational study. Subjects were undergraduate medical students, at four different phases of their course. They were asked to fill an anonymous feedback form regarding their family and educational background and prospective fields of specialization and placement. Medium of education, interaction with faculty, practices of evaluation and feedback to and from students and use of media in teaching etc were also studied in order to gain an insight into the temporal progression of the thought process of undergraduates.

Results: Majority (70%) students wanted to study clinical subjects in post graduation. General Medicine and General Surgery were the most coveted specialties. Passion for the subject, monetary gains and how well the subject was taught were the three main bases for the choice of specialty. Majority of students wanted to serve in the government sector after study. Work life balance remained the top priority for more than 58% students in their future lives.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the decision to pursue postgraduate or super specialty programs is a complex one that is influenced by a variety of factors, including the quality of undergraduate education, the availability of mentorship and guidance, and personal preferences and career goals. Medical schools and organizations can support medical students by providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to make informed decisions about their future careers.

Keywords: First year medical students, Malaysia, Medical Education, Post-Graduation.

INTRODUCTION

Medical education is a long and rigorous process that requires a significant commitment of time and resources. After completing their undergraduate studies, many medical students face the decision of whether to pursue further education in the form of postgraduate or super specialty programs. The knowledge and choice of medical

undergraduates play a significant role in determining whether they choose to pursue postgraduate or super specialty programs. Medical students who have a clear understanding of the different career paths available to them, as well as the knowledge and skills required for each path, are more likely to make informed decisions about their future careers. One important factor that influences the knowledge and choice of medical undergraduates is the quality of the undergraduate education they receive. Medical schools that provide a well-rounded education, including exposure to a wide range of specialties and hands-on training opportunities, are more likely to produce graduates who are well-prepared for postgraduate and super specialty programs. Another important factor is the availability of mentorship and guidance. Medical students who have access to mentorship and guidance from experienced physicians are more likely to make informed decisions about their future careers. They are also more likely to succeed in postgraduate and super specialty programs, as they will have the support and guidance of experienced physicians to help them navigate the challenges of these programs.

Additionally, personal preferences and career goals also play an important role in the decision making process of medical undergraduates. Some may be interested in the more hands-on and patient care oriented fields such as Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, while others might be more inclined towards the more research oriented fields such as Pathology, Radiology, Dermatology etc.

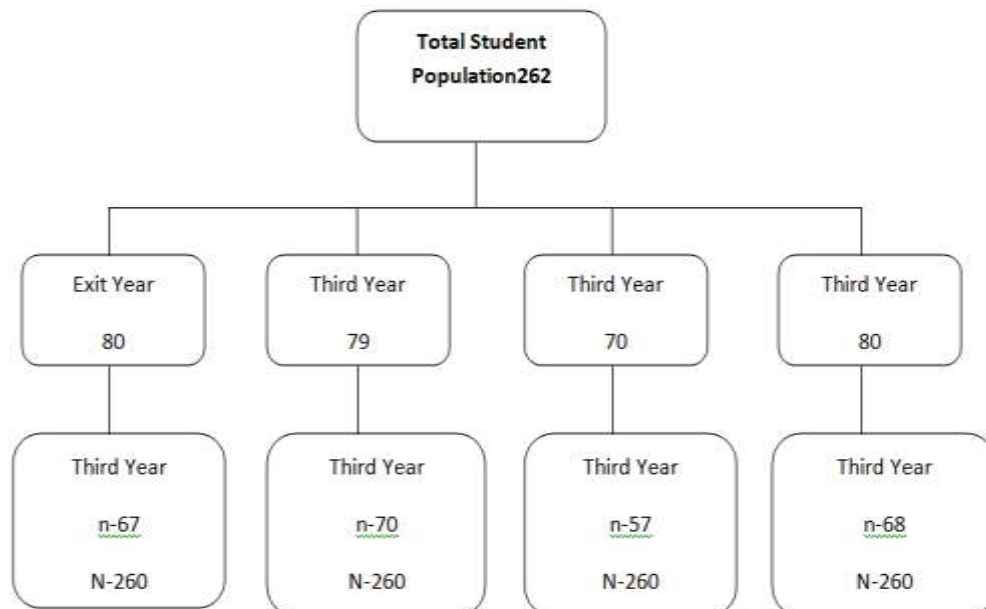
AIM

National policies on the number and distribution of postgraduate seats in medical colleges are based on estimated projections of the quantum need of the medical workforce in the country in future. In order to attract talent, it is imperative to know what factors, modifiable or non-modifiable, the choice of specialization.

METHODS

This cross-sectional, observational study was conducted at a medical college in the national capital. The subjects were undergraduate medical students, at four different phases of their course to analyze their choice of subject of specialization and factors that are associated with it. Students from the entry year, second year, third year and exit year, representing the outgoing batches were recruited for this study (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Sample Frame and Sampling



An anonymous feedback form was prepared after thorough brainstorming with preclinical, paraclinical and clinical faculty and also medical education faculty. The feedback form was designed to be a comprehensive document that aimed to gather as much information as was realistically possible about all factors, both direct and indirect, that could have a potential impact on the choice of specialty of a medical undergraduate. The students

were asked to fill an anonymous feedback form regarding their family and educational background and prospective fields of specialization and placement.

RESULTS

Of the 280 students who participated in the study, 129 (46.1%) were males and 151 (53.9%) females. Overall, the average age of the study participants was 20.99 years (+2.231) (Table 1). 92.5% students had English as the medium of education in the institute last attended. Overall 85.8% students came from defense backgrounds, and nearly 80% mothers were home makers. More than half the students cleared the entrance exam for entry into medicine course in their second attempt which shows their perseverance towards their chosen profession. 77% respondents had a history of multiple attempts at entry. Passion for the field was the leading cause why people chose medicine accounting for 36% followed by desire to serve society (26%) and to deserve respect from society (18%). A sizeable more than 16% were influenced by their families and only 10% considered monetary gains while they chose this profession. With the help of our feedback forms, we tried to elucidate the extent of technological proficiency of our students on a cross sectional basis. The idea was to estimate their efficiency depending on whether they could confidently prepare a word document/a powerpoint presentation/a website. While in the entry level batch, only 65.1% students could create powerpoints with ease, this number sequentially rose to 66.7%, 80.6% and 92.3% through successive batches. Nearly half of the participants wanted to pursue post graduation and another 50% super specialization. The students aiming at super specialization consistently increased from 46.5% in the junior most batch to 48% in second year, 50.7% in third year and 53.8% in the exit batch. The corresponding figures for graduation only plummeted from 4.7% in the entrant batch to zero in the outgoing batch

Table 1: Age and Gender distribution of the participants

Year	Mean Age in Years (\pm SD)	Male N (%)	Female N (%)
Entry	19.21(1.228%)	47(54.7%)	39(45.3%)
Second	20.33(1.349%)	37(49.3%)	38(50.7%)
Third	21.28(1.126%)	18(26.9%)	49(73.1%)
Exit	24.5(1.336%)	27(51.9%)	25(48.1%)

Table 2: Year wise distribution of choice of speciality

	Entry Year N (%)	Second year N (%)	Third year N (%)	Exit year N (%)	Overall N (%)
Nonclinical	23(26.7%)	5(6.7%)	1(1.5%)	3(5.8%)	32(11.4%)
Clinical	34(39.5%)	63(84%)	63(94%)	46(88.5%)	206(73.6%)
Not Decided	29(33.7%)	7(9.3%)	3(4.5%)	3(5.8%)	42(15%)
Overall	86(100%)	75(100%)	67(100%)	52(100%)	280(100%)

DISCUSSION

Postgraduate students are introduced to the concept of designing and conducting research during residency. Medical research carried out by undergraduate and postgraduate students in India is disappointing compared to developed countries. To date research has not become a mandatory part of the curriculum of undergraduate medical education in India. In Germany, where research is an integral part of undergraduate medical curriculum;

medical students were involved in 30% of the publications in a particular institution. A study reported that in a European country, Croatia, % of the undergraduate students were involved in research projects. We carried out this study to assess the awareness of residents toward research and to find out whether the current methods of training and facilities are adequate to foster a research culture in postgraduate students

CONCLUSION

Career preferences aren't always related to prior experiences, or to actual knowledge of the area. This study shows how careful we should be to trust students' opinions and preferences about specialties; they probably need much guidance in career choice.

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