Speciality Choice Among Pre-Residency Medical Graduates

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ABSTRACT

Background: The decision of leading a particular specialty as future profession can be quite difficult for every pre-residency medical graduates. Mapping of the factors that determine specialty choice is essential to develop interventions that are aimed to influence the choices of career.

Objective: To determine the choice of specialty among pre-residency medical graduates

Material and Methods: This cross sectional study was conducted in Mayo Hospital, Lahore and Allama Iqbal Memorial Teaching Hospital, Sialkot from July to December 2017. A total of 150 fresh medical graduates, working as pre-residency medical graduates were enrolled by non-probability convenient sampling. The data was collected on a pre-designed questionnaire. The data was entered in SPSS 22 for statistical analysis and was presented as frequency tables.

Results: Majority of pre-residency graduates (15.3%) were desirous of perusing their career as General practitioner, followed by Gynaecology & Obstetrics (14%), Internal Medicine (12%) and General surgery (8%) and Anesthesia (8%). However, among males, the top choice was General practitioner (14.7%) while among females, the top choice was Gynaecology & Obstetrics (12%). Personal interest was the most common contributory factor (28%) for career choice, followed by parental influence (18%), spouse influence (16.7%) and financial prospects (14%).

Conclusion: The most frequently chosen specialty by males was General practitioner while Gynaecology & Obstetrics was preferred by females.

Key words: *Medical specialty, choice, pre-residency medical graduates*

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INTRODUCTION

The decision of pursuing a future specialty in medical profession can be a difficult decision for the pre-residency medical graduates as they have a variety of considerations to face.[1] The medical specialist is indulged in a number of tasks, which include providing education, conducting research, contributing to health policy formulation and the implementing health care programs.[2] Specialty choice of a medical practitioner is a multidimensional process. Mapping of the factors that determine specialty choice is pivotal. The need for specialist medical care to fulfill the population's health care needs is increasing, and the unequal distribution has damaged the results for availability and affordability of comprehensive health services, leading in difficult access to specialist care.[3] In a one of the surveys conducted in the southern region at King Khalid University College of Medicine, Mehmood et al[4] it came into exploration that surgery, internal medicine, pediatrics, orthopedics, and ophthalmology were the desired professions opted by pre residents as field to pursue their medical career ahead.

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Pakistani medical graduates spend their 5 years in study and 1 year in an internship. Students have their clinical classes and ward duties from 3rd year. It is basically after 5 years of medical education that the graduates start their clinical rotations as house officers and further make decisions about their medical careers. Therefore, our present study was aimed to determine the choice of medical specialty among pre-residency medical graduates.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This cross sectional survey was conducted in Mayo Hospital, Lahore (having affiliation with King Edward Medical University, Lahore) and Allama Iqbal Memorial Teaching Hospital, Sialkot (having affiliation with Khawaja Muhammad Safdar Medical College, Sialkot) from July to December 2017. The study was approved by intuitional review board. A total of 150 fresh medical graduates, working as interns (pre-residency medical graduates) were included in the study by non-probability convenient sampling. Sample size of 150 was calculated by taking 14% as choice of preferred specialty of pre-residency medical graduates[1] with 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. Data on participant's gender, specialty and factor affecting that specialty was collected on pre-designed questionnaire and was entered in SPSS 22 version for statistical analysis and was presented as frequency tables.

RESULTS

Among 150 pre-residency medical graduates, majority (15.3%) of them were taking the career as General practitioner, followed by Gynaecology & Obstetrics (14%), Internal Medicine (12%) and General surgery (8%) and Anesthesia (8%). However, among male graduates, the top choice was General practitioner (14.7%) followed by General surgery (4.7%), Anesthesia (4.7%) and Internal Medicine (4), while among female graduates, the top carreer choice was Gyneacology & Obs (12%) followed by Internal Medicine (8%), General surgery (3.4%), Anesthesia (3.4%). (Table I). Personal interest was the most common contributory factor (28%) for career choice, followed by parental influence (18%), spouse influence (16.7%) and financial prospects (14%). (Table II).

Table I: Specialty choices and Gender influence (n=150)

Specialty choices	***Male n(%)***	***Female n(%)***	***Total n(%)***
General Practitioner	22(14.7)	00(0)	23 (15.3)
Internal Medicine	06(4)	12(8)	18 (12)
Gynaecology & Obstetrics	04(2.7)	18(12)	21(14)
Anesthesia	07(4.7)	05(3.4)	12 (8)
General Surgery	07(4.7)	05(3.4)	12(8)
Chest Medicine	05(3.4)	03(2)	08(5.3)
Pediatrics	04(2.7)	03(2)	07(4.7)
Neurology	01(0.7)	02(1.3)	03(2)
ENT	03(2)	01(0.7)	04(2.7)
Dermatology	01(0.7)	05(3.4)	06(4)
Cardiology	04(2.7)	01(0.7)	05(3.3)
Psychiatry	03(2)	01(0.7)	04(2.7)
Endocrinology	01(0.7)	04(2.7)	05(3.4)
Oncology	01(0.7)	01(0.7)	02(1.3)
Vascular Diseases	01(0.7)	02(1.3)	03(2)
Nephrology	02(1.3)	01(0.7)	03(2)
Gastroentrology	05(3.3)	02(1.3)	07(4.7)
Ophthalmology	03(2)	04(2.7)	07(4.7)
Total	80(53.3)	70(46.7)	150 (100)

Table II: Specialty choices and Motivational factors (n=150)

Specialty choices	Personal interest	Influence of parents	Influence of spouse	Financial prospects	Influence of mentor	Appraisal of own skill	Job security	***Total n(%)***
General Practitioner	3	9	7	4	0	0	0	23
Internal Medicine	8	5	2	2	1	0	0	18
Gynaecology & Obstetrics	7	2	1	5	3	0	3	21
Anesthesia	2	0	3	3	0	1	3	12
General Surgery	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	12
Chest Medicine	1	0	0	1	6	0	0	08
Pediatrics	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	07
Neurology	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	03
ENT	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	04
Dermatology	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	06
Cardiology	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	05
Psychiatry	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	04
Endocrinology	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	05
Oncology	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	02
Vascular Diseases	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	03
Nephrology	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	03
Gastroentrology	1	1	0	2	0	0	3	07
Ophthalmology	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	07
Total	42(28)	27(18)	25(16.7)	21(14)	17(11.3)	05(3.3)	13(8.7)	150

DISCUSSION

In present study, 150 pre-residency medical graduates, who were working in two tertiary institutions, participated. Among males, the top choice was General practitioner (14.7%) while among females, the top choice was Gynaecology & Obstetrics (12%). The spectrum of career choice in females was narrow and they had under representation in major specialties and more inclination towards Gynae and Obstetrics. These results[5,6,7,8,9] correlate with the results gathered from all over the globe where females representation in major specialties was under represented. Similarly, respondents from Nigeria[2] also selected obstetrics and gynecology followed by Surgery, Pediatrics, Anesthesiology. However, internal medicine was the preferred specialty for Saudi medical students followed by family medicine, general surgery, pediatrics and emergency medicine.[1] The discrepancy found in the results collected from our study may reflect the dilemma of our society which favors Obstetrics and Gynaecology for our female practitioners in observance to our customs and society.

Personal interest (28%) was found to be the most common contributory factor, followed by parental influence (18%), spouse influence (16.7%) and financial prospects (14%). In a study from Saudia,[1] personal interest in specialty, career prospects, and appraisal of one's own skills and aptitude were the leading determinants of participants' career choice. The general patterns of influences on specialty career choice echo previous reports, including the lower appeal of surgery to females.[7,10] Lefevre et al[11] found that main reason to choose specialty is the life style a person is living, while Newton et al[12] from United States medical schools indicated that ways of living life along with salary are the two factors that influenced their career choice. In a study from Nigeria,[2] career choice was also most frequently influenced by personal interest (66.6%), and was least affected by influence of relations (1.7%). However, in present study, the personal interest and influence of relations was predominating.

The results from our study might be helpful to perceive the most preferred specialty among pre-residency medical graduates. This is obvious from our study that there might be gap in some specialties. Therefore, the need of hour is that although we should consider the wishes of our fresh graduates but at the same time we should motivate them to have interest in minor specialties as well. This study has particular limitations. This study was undertaken in two hospitals only with limited sample size. Further multicentre studies and qualitative assessments are required to explore the knowledge gaps in career choice among pre-residency medical graduates.

CONCLUSION

The most frequently chosen specialty by males was General practitioner while Gynaecology & Obstetrics by females. Personal interest was the most common contributory factor for career choice.

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