

Career preferences of medical students

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Preferences of present day medical students may reflect ultimate career choices of future medical practitioners. Understanding career preferences and factors which affect these choices are important for the medical educationist in designing educational programs. However, data is sparse in this area.

This study is aimed to describe career preference of final year medical students of University of Peradeniya and factors which influence their preference

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted on 197 final year medical students, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya. There were 98 females and 99 males. Data regarding career preference and factors influenced their preference was obtained using a self-administered questionnaire which consisted of both closed and open ended questions. Questions were adopted from previous studies and questionnaire was pretested among 20 pre-intern doctors prior to administration. Data was analyzed using SPSS (Version 20).

The response rate was 81.7%. Eighty two percent (82%) of students wanted to specialize in a particular area. The most popular specialties were Medicine, Surgery, Gynecology & Obstetrics and Paediatrics. Dermatology was also ranked at the top among females. Psychiatry, Anaesthesia, Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic surgery and Emergency Medicine were also considered as second and third preferences. The least preferred specialties included Medical Microbiology, Medical Parasitology, Histopathology, Virology, Radiology and Chemical Pathology. Community Medicine and Medical Administration were also found to be less popular. No student opted for Transfusion Medicine as their first, second or third choice.

Following are the important determinants in choosing a specialty; personal interest (87.9%), enjoying the specialty during the appointment (58.5%), inspiration from role models (53.8%), interesting teaching & learning activity (50.8%) & acceptable working hours (47.7%).

Medicine, Surgery, Gynaecology and Obstetrics and Paediatrics, the subjects with the highest exposure in medical curriculum are the most preferred specialties. Dermatology, Psychiatry, Anaesthesia, Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic Surgery and Emergency Medicine were also among the top preferences indicating interest in these areas. It may be necessary to formulate action plans to encourage students to take up less popular specialties.