pISSN 2394-6032 | eISSN 2394-6040

Research Article

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18203/2394-6040.ijcmph20151058

Career choices regarding medical education among first year medical students of IIMSR Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna, Maharashtra, India

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Received: 07 September 2015 Accepted: 09 October 2015

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ABSTRACT

Background: In India, becoming a doctor is one of the highest aspirations of many school going students and their parents. Medical profession is one of the most highly rated professions among the students mainly due to the fact that it offers prospects of a financially as well as a socially satisfying career.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted from August to September 2015 amongst 94 first year medical students of 2015 batch of Indian Institute of Medical Science & Research Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna, Maharashtra. A pre-designed questionnaire which assessed career choices regarding medical education was the tool of data collection. Results were analyzed in the form of percentage and proportions whenever appropriate.

Results: Out of total 94 medical students, 45 (47.8%) were males and 49 (52.2%) were females. The major reason for choosing medical profession among students were to serve the community 55 (58.5%), followed by inspiration by family members 44 (46.8%) and social status attached to the profession 23 (24.4%). More than half 54 (57.4%) of them had been influenced in one way or the other by another person to pursue a medical carrier, most often a parent.

Conclusions: In this study, main reason for joining medical career was the interest in service to community. Factors such as family background and inspiration or force by family members may play a role.

Keywords: Career choices, Medical education, Medical students

INTRODUCTION

Diverse factors influence medical students' choice of eventual career; career preference at the time of admission to the medical course is thought to play an important role. Recently, there has been an increased interest in the factors which influence the career choices of medical and allied health science professionals. Most studies have looked at the future aspirations and career intentions of medical students and postgraduates. In the recent past, a number of medical colleges have mushroomed in India. This has provided more

opportunities for students to join the main stream medical profession than the allied health science professions. So, it would be interesting to know as to what makes the students join the MBBS course and their future plans.² What is the motivation behind the students' choice of MBBS? Is it related to a genuine desire to serve mankind and to alleviate suffering? What lay ahead for those who choose to join the profession and what kind of set up do they aspire to work in? Information regarding career choices of medical students is important to plan human resources for health, design need-based educational programs, and ensure equitable and quality health care services in a country.³ Hence the present study was carried out to find out the socio-demographic profile of first year medical students, the reasons for joining medical profession, and their aspirations after completing graduate study.

METHODS

A cross-sectional questionnaire based study was carried out from August to September 2015 among first year medical students of IIMSR Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna which is, affiliated to the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), Nashik, Maharashtra at the time of their entry into the medical college. The IIMSR Medical College, Badnapur has been offering the MBBS course since 2013, with a maximum annual intake of 100 students, majority were minorities. The students joining this course come from all over India. After receiving approval from the institutional ethical committee, all 100 first year medical students admitted in August 2015 batch at this institution were included in the study. On the day of the study, out of total 100 students, 98 students were present and filled the questionnaires, out of which 2 were returned unfilled and 2 were incomplete, that's why they were excluded from the final analysis; at final 94 questionnaires were filled complete and included in the study and data were analyzed.

A self-administered semi-structured questionnaire was developed for the study by the investigators after reviewing the relevant literature. The questionnaire had eliciting information about their socio-demographic profile, reasons for opting for medicine as a profession, and career aspirations in a medical college was administered to them. The students were explained and informed regarding the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was administered to the consenting students after obtaining the requisite permission from the head of the institution. They were requested to complete the questionnaires, without discussing it amongst themselves.

Statistical analysis: Results were analyzed statistically using percentage, proportions and Z-test. When Z value was more than 1.96, the P value will be less than 0.05 and observed difference was considered to be statistically significant.

RESULTS

The demographic characteristic of the study population is shown in Table 1. Out of total 94 participants, 45 (47.8%) were males and 49 (52.2%) were females. Majority 50 (53.2%) of students were in the age groups of 17-18 years. There were 27 (28.8%) participants had their residents out of Maharashtra state. None of the study subjects was married. Majority 70 (74.4%) parents of the students had their education above graduation. About 19 (20.2%) of the respondents had one or both parents working as a medical practitioner and 8 (16.3%) had one or both parents or a close family member working as a

health care professional. About 67 (63.5%) of the respondents had neither parents nor a close family member working as a medical practitioner or a health care professional.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the study population.

Particulars	Male (n=45)	Female (n=49)	Total (n=94)
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Age (years)	22 (51.1)	27 (55.1)	50 (50 0)
17-18	23 (51.1)	27 (55.1)	50 (53.2)
18-19	15 (33.3)	15 (30.6)	30 (31.9)
19-20	06 (13.3)	06 (12.3)	12 (12.8)
Above 20	01 (2.2)	01 (2.0)	02 (2.1)
Residence			
Maharashtra state	32 (71.2)	35 (71.4)	67 (71.2)
Out of Maharashtra	13 (28.8)	14 (28.6)	27 (28.8)
state		<u> </u>	
Schooling Government	09 (20.0)	12 (24.5)	21 (22.4)
Private	36 (80.0)		21 (22.4)
	30 (80.0)	37 (75.5)	73 (77.6)
Education of father	00 (0 0)	00 (0 0)	00 (0 0)
Primary Secondary	00 (0.0) 09 (20.0)	00 (0.0) 04 (8.1)	00 (0.0) 13 (13.8)
3	09 (20.0)	04 (8.1)	
Higher secondary Graduate	26 (57.8)	31 (63.3)	11 (11.8) 57 (60.6)
Post graduate	06 (13.3)	07 (14.3)	13 (13.8)
Education of mother	00 (13.3)	07 (14.3)	13 (13.6)
Primary	03 (6.7)	02 (4.1)	05 (5.3)
Secondary	19 (42.2)	07 (14.3)	26 (27.8)
Higher secondary	07 (15.5)	22 (44.9)	29 (30.8)
Graduate	13 (28.8)	16 (32.7)	29 (30.8)
Post graduate	03 (6.7)	02 (4.1)	05 (5.3)
Occupation of father	03 (0.7)	02 (4.1)	03 (3.3)
Doctor	06 (13.3)	05 (10.2)	11 (11.8)
Service	06 (13.3)	06 (10.2)	12 (12.8)
Businessman	20 (44.5)	25 (51.0)	45 (47.9)
Engineers/teacher	10 (22.3)	08 (16.3)	18 (19.2)
Others (like chemist)	03 (6.7)	05 (10.2)	08 (16.3)
Occupation of mother	()	()	10 (2000)
Doctor	05 (11.2)	03 (6.1)	08 (16.3)
Service	02 (4.5)	01 (2.0)	03 (3.1)
Businessman	00 (0.0)	01 (2.0)	01 (1.0)
Teacher	02 (4.5)	03 (6.1)	05 (5.3)
Housewife	36 (80.0)	41 (83.7)	77 (81.9)

The responses of the medical students regarding their career choices are tabulated in Table 2. The major reason for choosing medical profession among students were to serve the community 55 (58.5%), followed by inspiration by family members 44 (46.8%), and social status attached to the profession 23 (24.4%). The differences between male and female students were not statistically significant. When asked the question like 'which speciality would you like to join after complete your graduation, maximum 34 (36.1%) students gave the answer as surgical followed by medicine 29 (30.8%) and

obstetrics & gynecology 25 (26.5%) i.e. clinical subjects were still the first choice of students. Significant gender

differences were noted in choices of surgical specialities (p=0.0009) and obstetrics & gynaecology (p=0.0001).

Table 2: Career choices in medical education among study population.

Questions regarding career choice	Male (%) (n=45)	Female (%) (n=49)	Z-value (p value)		
1. Reasons for choosing medical profession#					
a] Inspiration from a family member	18 (40.0)	26 (53.1)	1.267 (0.204)		
b] To serve the community	27 (60.0)	28 (57.1)	0.280 (0.789)		
c] Forced by their parents	03 (6.6)	02 (4.1)	0.557 (0.575)		
d] Social status attached to the profession	10 (22.2)	13 (26.5)	0.485 (0.624)		
e] Wide job opportunity	08 (17.7)	15 (30.6)	1.445 (0.147)		
f] Miscellaneous (personal interest, income	09 (20.0)	04 (8.2)	1.660 (0.096)		
will allow an enjoyable lifestyle)					
2. If not medical, then what other course					
would have you joined					
a] Dental	09 (20.0)	19 (38.7)	1.988 (0.046)*		
b] Ayurved	08 (17.7)	15 (30.6)	1.445 (0.147)		
c] Business management	10 (22.2)	02 (4.0)	2.632 (0.008)*		
d] Lawyer	04 (8.8)	05 (10.2)	0.216 (0.825)		
e] Engineers	08 (17.7)	05 (10.2)	1.062 (0.289)		
f] Other (like scientists, pilot, sports)	06 (13.3)	03 (6.1)	1.186 (0.234)		
3. Which speciality would you like to join					
after complete your graduation					
a] Medicine specialities	16 (35.5)	13 (26.5)	0.946 (0.342)		
b] Surgical specialities	24 (53.3)	10 (20.4)	3.318 (0.0009)*		
c] Obstetrics and Gynaecology	02 (4.4)	23 (46.9)	4.658 (0.0001)*		
d] Basic medical subjects	02 (4.4)	03 (6.1)	0.362 (0.718)		
e] Medical administration / management	01 (2.2)	00 (0.0)	1.049 (0.293)		
4. Was your decision to pursue a medical					
career influenced by a particular person(s)					
a] Yes	26 (57.7)	28 (57.1)	0.062 (0.952)		
b] No	19 (42.3)	21 (42.9)	0.062 (0.952)		
#Multiple response , *Indicates p<0.05 i.e. significant					

Students were questioned, if you not get medical admission, then what other course would have you joined. With regards to this, dental (29.8%) and business management (12.8%) was the course cited by students for choosing as a career. The differences between male and female students were statistically significant for dental (p=0.046)and business management (p=0.008)respectively. More than half 54 (57.4%) of them had been influenced in one way or the other by another person to pursue a medical carrier, most often a parent. The differences between male and female students were not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, although, service to the community (58.5%) was the main reason for joining medical profession, inspiration by family members 44 (46.8%), and social status of the doctor (24.4%) and parental expectations (5.3%) were also the reasons cited by some of the students. Studies done by Lal P et al.⁶ in Delhi, Kuriakose S et al.⁷ in Mangalore, Harth SC et al.⁸ in

Australia, Razali SM⁹ in Malasyia, and Perara KM et al.¹⁰ in Sri Lanka also found similar reasons for entering medical school in their study. It is encouraging to note that the main reason for joining medical career was the interest in service to community. In contrast, a study done by Seetharaman N et al.⁵ among interns of a south Indian medical college and a study done by Shah S.^[11] in Ahmadabad revealed that 16.8% of the interns and 8% of students had listed 'to serve the community' as a reason for choosing medicine as a career respectively.

With regard to the students' choices of post-graduation, gender played a role in choosing specialty in our study; majority students wish to pursue a post-graduate degree in one of the clinical subjects and very few students were inclined towards taking up the non-clinical subjects as a career choice. Statistically significant gender differences were noted in the choices of surgical specialities (more males) (p=0.0009) and obstetrics & gynaecology (more females) (p=0.0001). Similar results have been reported in earlier studies done by Seetharaman N et al. and Gour N et al. from India. However, a recent study done by

She L et al. 13 from China has shown evidence of changing patterns in the traditional gender based choices in post-graduation. It is interesting to note that though a career in obstetrics and gynaecology involves unpredictable schedules and long hours, it is one of the most common specialities chosen by women worldwide. This may be because of the perception that women would prefer to be treated by female doctors, thus increasing the demand for female obstetricians.

Students were questioned, if you not get medical admission, then what other course would have you joined. With regards to this, dental (29.8%) and business management (12.8%) was the course cited by students for choosing as a career. Similar results were observed in a study done by Kuriakose S et al. 7 in Mangalore, India.

In the present study, more than half 54 (57.4%) of them had been influenced in one way or the other by another person to pursue a medical career, most often a parent. This is in accordance with similar study done by Kuriakose S et al. ⁷ in Mangalore, India.

Limitations

Limitations of this cross-sectional study is that the findings are from a single private medical college and had a small sample size; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other medical colleges in India.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study concludes that 'service to the community' and 'inspiration by family members' were the most common reasons why subjects chose medicine as a career. Social status of the doctor and parental expectations were the other common reasons cited for their career choice. The findings of this study could also be used to design strategies that help students to prepare rationally for a career in a field as demanding as medicine and perhaps a larger study will help to give suitable direction to medical educators and policy makers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our deep sense of gratitude to the Management, JIIU Trust and Dr. Amarnath B. Solepure, Dean, IIMSR Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna, Maharashtra. We also acknowledge the help and support of Dr. G. M. Bhaware, Dr. M. D. Murade, Dr. S. M. Khan, Tutors and Mr. P. R. Gangwal, Statistician, Dept. of Community Medicine (PSM) of IIMSR Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna during data collection.

Funding: No funding sources Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the

institutional ethics committee

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Cite this article as: Giri PA, Sambutwad RC, Kausar HM, Muneshwar SN, Shafee M. Career choices regarding medical education among first year medical students of IIMSR Medical College, Badnapur, Jalna, Maharashtra, India. Int J Community Med Public Health 2015;2:620-3.