

Title: Students' early motivations for four medical specialties : results of a comparative study

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Abstract Text:

Background:

Workforce planning to fulfill society needs is a central public health issue and has consequences for medical education. Evidence suggests that career preferences at the beginning of undergraduate training seem to impact definitive career decision. Little is known about motivational factors towards different specialties. We aimed to explore motivational factors and their relationship to students' degree of motivation for four specialties.

Summary of work:

At the beginning of years 3 and 4 (out of 6), 200 medical students (115 women) indicated on a 6-point Likert-scale their degree of deterrence (=1)/attractiveness(=6) regarding 12 different factors list as well as their degree of motivation (1=low to 6=high) for four specialties (Surgery (SUR), Family medicine (FM), Radiology (RAD), Psychiatry (PSY)). Linear regression was used to analyze how these factors predicted the degree of motivation for each specialty.

Summary of results:

Students reported an average motivation for FM and SUR (3.5) and a lower motivation for RAD and PSY (2.8 and 2.7, respectively). Intellectual challenge was the strongest predictor of SUR motivation ($\beta=.22$), long-term patient relationship for FM ($\beta=.25$), role model for RAD ($\beta=.20$) and career opportunities for PSY ($\beta=.30$). Being a male significantly predicted motivations for SUR and RAD ($\beta=.17$ and $\beta=.21$, respectively).

Conclusions:

Students' early motivations were specific to each considered specialty. Male gender predicted SUR and RAD motivations.

Take-home message:

Investigating students' motivational factors for specific medical specialties could help defining efficient strategies to encourage career choices meeting society needs.