

Personal and motivational factors influencing undergraduate medical students' preferences for general practice career: results of a longitudinal study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background: In Switzerland, like in many EU countries, an insufficient proportion of students choose a general practice (GP) career. GP physicians' shortage is a key issue. Undecided students might be a target to fulfill this gap.

Aims: 1) identify medical students GP career preferences throughout preclinical years
2) determine whether those choosing GP vs those undecided present specific personal characteristics, motivations and/or motives to choose GP.

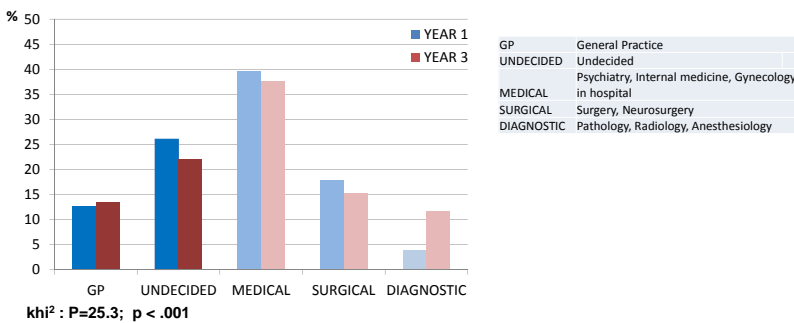
2. METHODS

Setting & Sample: At the beginning and the end of the 3 preclinical years, 237 medical students (138 women) self-reported their career preferences, level of motivation (1=low to 6=high) for different specialties including GP, personal characteristics (gender, personality, motivation type) and level of attractiveness (1=low, 6=high) of 12 motives for choosing GP.

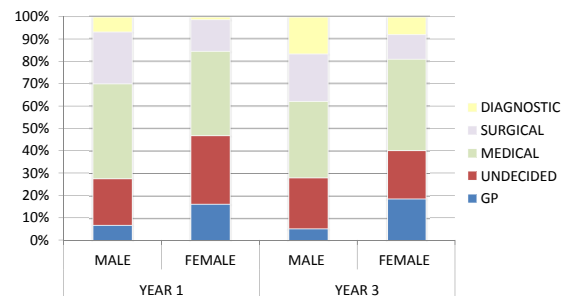
Analyses: Paired T-test, chi-square, ANOVA, linear regression.

3. RESULTS

Graph 1: Percentage of students career preference throughout preclinical years (N=237)



Graph 2: Percentage of students career preference throughout preclinical years (N=237) by gender



Throughout preclinical years:

- the proportion of students attracted by GP remained nearly unchanged at 12%.
- the proportion of undecided students slightly decreased (from 26% to 22%); this was mainly due to female.
- male were less attracted by GP than female, as well as less undecided at year 1.

Table 1: Comparison of level of motivation for GP, personal and motivational characteristics between students interested by a GP career or students undecided at the end of preclinical years

	Career preference GP (n=36)	Career preference: Undecided (n=59)	ANOVA p-value
Measure/Mean±SD			
GP motivation	5.1 ± 1.0	3.0 ± 1.3	.001
Neuroticism	23.3 ± 9.1	21.4 ± 6.7	.070
Extraversion	30.5 ± 4.7	29.6 ± 5.3	.139
Openness	29.2 ± 6.4	29.8 ± 5.5	.662
Agreeableness	32.0 ± 4.1	30.0 ± 3.7	.046
Conscientiousness	33.3 ± 6.1	30.3 ± 5.8	.034
Extrinsic motivation	3.8 ± .8	4.0 ± .8	.217
Intrinsic motivation	4.9 ± 1.1	4.0 ± .9	.001
Caring motivation	5.4 ± .9	5.2 ± .7	.242

Table 2: Prediction of the level of motivation for GP according to the motives and gender of the 2 groups of students at the end of preclinical years

Career preference	GP	Undecided
Model/ Adj.R ²	.360	.350
Lifestyle	.175	.096
Working in rural environment	.152	.165
Shortage in the speciality	.002	.020
Long-term relationship with patients	.198*	.257**
Variety of pathology	.297**	.245**
Intellectual challenge	.106	.085
Careers opportunities	.061	.074
Potential income	-.233*	-.169
Post graduate studies duration	.096	.059
Social acknowledgement	.032	.123
Peer acknowledgement	-.066	-.118
Following a role model	-.131	-.221**
Gender	.095	.010

* p < .05, ** p < .01

"Long-term relationship with patients" and "Variety of pathology" were significant motives predicting GP motivation both for students attracted by GP ($\beta=.20$; $\beta=.30$) and undecided ($\beta=.26$; $\beta=.25$). Among students attracted by GP, "potential income" was a significant drawback ($\beta=-.23$), whereas for undecided it was "following a role model" ($\beta=-.22$). Gender didn't significantly predict GP motivation.

4. SUMMARY

- Results at one medical school confirm that the proportion of preclinical students interested by a GP career is largely insufficient to meet the needs of the population (about 50%).
- At the end of preclinical years, less than 15% of the students were motivated and intended to be trained as GPs. In addition, about 20% were still undecided, but they were moderately motivated for GP.
- Undecided students present specific personal and motivational characteristics as well as specific motives for eventually choose GP.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Profiling personal characteristics and motivations for undecided students could help targeting efficient strategies to encourage GP career choices meeting society needs.

