Why choose general practice?

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Tropical Medical Training / James Cook University

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Aims

To explore the factors influencing James Cook University (JCU) medical school graduates to choose a career in general practice, and factors influencing work location.
Background

JCU medical school opened 2000
First graduates 2005
Declining interest in general practice at graduation reported (Veitch et al. 2006)
2001 v 2011

- Undecided
- General Practice
- Rural Generalist
- Physician
- Anaesthetics
- Emergency/ICU
- Obstetrics/Gynaecology
- Surgery
- Orthopaedics
- Paediatrics
- Psychiatry
- Other

0 5 10 15 20 25

Red: 2001
Blue: 2011
General Practice/Rural Generalists

2001

18.9% (11/58)

2011

4/58 Rural Generalists

44.8% (26/58)

37.5% primary care AIHW 2008 Medical Labour Force Survey

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Methods

Longitudinal mixed methods study
Ethics approval JCU HREC
Data collection from first cohort JCU doctors (n=58)
Semi-structured interviews of subgroup of 14 participants using a nested sample design with purposive criterion sampling:
  • Consent
  • Indication of change to/from a career in general practice
Transcribed in full
Manually coded
Thematic content analysis
Interviewees

Of 14 participants:
  9 female, 5 male
  10 changed to GP career
    5 undecided
    3 from O&G
    1 from surgery
    1 from urology
  2 changed away from GP career
  2 unchanged and pursued GP career
  4 rural generalists
Emerging Themes

- Mentors
- Interest
- Patients
- Family
- Continuity
- Experiences
- Medicine
- Work
- Location
- Remuneration
- Lifestyle
- Generals
- Community
- Exciting
- Broad
- PGPPP
- Insurance
- Challenging
Mentors

“My experiences with our family GP influenced me to consider a career in general practice” (F, 29)

“fantastic supervisor and mentor” (F, 30)

“[X] is a card. I wanted to be just like him” (M, 33)
Medical student experiences

“my first rural placement was just fantastic” (F, 30)

“we probably got a bit bombarded with GP stuff” (M, 33)

“turned me off being a rural GP a bit because I saw how hard they worked” (F, 29)
“rotations turned me against emergency medicine” (F, 30)

“I found the hours challenging in hospital” (F, 30)

“I liked seeing patients under my own steam” (F, 30)

“I applied to GP training and anaesthetics and got into both, so then I had to choose” (M, 33)
“What’s that?” (F, 31)

“I don’t think that existed when we graduated” (F, 29)

“I would have liked to try general practice but was told I couldn’t apply because I had already applied for GP training. I just wanted to try it and see if I was making the right choice” (F, 31)

“Even though I didn’t end up doing GP, it gave me a great idea of what happens outside the hospital system” (M, 33)
Family and Lifestyle

Desire to settle down and start a family
Consideration of extended family support
Flexibility of work hours

“I realised I didn’t want to spend the rest of my life doing shift work” (F, 29)
Remuneration

Not a factor in the career path decision for any participant

Costs of insurance and litigation were of concern

“You can live pretty comfortably no matter what you do”

(M, 33)
Patient factors

Continuity of care
Holistic care
Disadvantaged patients/access and equity

“I hated never knowing what happened to people after I saw them in hospital.” (F, 31)
Location

Multi-factorial decision:
- Access to health services
- Employment
- Education
- Social and family support

Previous positive experience in an area rewarded
“I loved living here as a med student so I came back”
(F, 29)
Work content

Variety of GP work attractive
Ability to develop areas of special interest

“Working as a GP I love the work” (M, 28)
“It seemed like an interesting job” (F, 30)
“I get to do some surgery in the practice” (M, 30)
Opportunity

“If I hadn’t got into anaesthetics I would have been pretty happy being a GP” (M, 33)
Conclusions

• Mentors are crucial

• Location multi-factorial decision

• Post graduate decision PGY1-3
References


• Health Workforce Queensland. (2005). Solutions to the provision of primary care to rural and remote communities in Queensland. Brisbane, Australia.

References


- Underhill A. (2001). *In the beginning: an anthology of the life experiences of the first intake of James Cook University School of Medicine students*. Townsville, Australia: James Cook University.