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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREER CHOICES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE STUDENTS AT THE MEDICAL FACULTY IN SKOPJE, MACEDONIA

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Introduction: Despite the high stress levels and the long working hours, Medicine continues to be one of the most desired careers.

Aim: To investigate the factors that motivate students to choose Medicine as a career and their expectations of the future career development.

Materials and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in April 2016 on 356 students (111/32% male and 245/68% female) at the Medical Faculty in Skopje, Macedonia. 196/55% were preclinical (first-second year) and 160/45% were clinical students (third-sixth year of studies). 41/12% of the surveyed students come from a rural area, 119/33% from the capital city Skopje and 196/55% come from another town. The students were given a questionnaire consisting of nine questions. The results were processed with Microsoft Excel and R.

Results: Most of the students (87%) chose Medicine because it was their personal wish, while 13% were influenced by their families, the media and the society. 51% would choose a surgical specialty, 32% Internal Medicine, 10% like to work in diagnostics, 4% would choose Family Medicine and 3% Public Health. 90% of the surveyed students would like to work abroad after graduation and 52% of them are eager to work in rural areas in more developed countries. The statistically significant differences between different groups of students are the following: preclinical students followed their own wish when choosing Medicine more often than clinical students (CI=95%; $p=0.0193$), clinical students consider working abroad more often than preclinical students (CI=95%; $p=0.0148$), students from Skopje are more likely to choose Medicine because of their families' expectations than students from rural areas (CI=95%; $p=0.0178$). Very few students want to work as family doctors in Macedonia, while many would work as family physicians in rural areas abroad (CI=99%; $p<0.00001$).

Conclusion: The extremely high number of medical students who consider emigration reflects the scarce employment opportunities and bad working conditions for young doctors. Urgent changes of policies are needed to prevent a collapse of the public health system.

Keywords: medical students, career choices, migration

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