

P-830 - THE INFLUENCE OF MEDICAL SCHOOL PLACEMENT ON PSYCHIATRY AS A SPECIALITY CAREER CHOICE

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Introduction: The career choices of medical students change often during the course of their training. Recent changes to the UK medical training structure force graduates to specialise earlier in their careers. This would make medical school placements even more important in speciality choice. In the UK psychiatry is one of the most undersubscribed specialities.

There are many possible reasons. However, there are very few areas where the profession can exert any influence. Currently, the only available option seems to be to compete with other specialities for the limited number of medical graduates available for postgraduate training.

Aim: To assess the influence of placement experience at medical school on student speciality preference and hence subsequent career choice.

Method: 50 medical students from a UK university were asked to rank 8 medical specialities from 1-8 (1 = most preferred, 8= least preferred) before and after placements in those respective specialities. The average ranks before and after placements were then compared.

Results: The average specialty ranks before and after placements were: Speciality (before: after), Dermatology (6.2:6.1), Otolaryngology (4.7:4.6), Geriatrics (5.0:4.8), General Practice (3.4:3.5), Obstetrics and Gynaecology (2.7:2.8), Ophthalmology (5.9:5.9), Paediatrics (3.3:3.2) and Psychiatry (4.8:5.1).

Conclusion: The results show that whilst placements in Geriatrics, Paediatrics and Otolaryngology led to an increases in preference +0.2, +0.1, +0.1 respectively. Psychiatry placement led to a large decrease in preference of -0.3. Therefore, specialities such as psychiatry that find it hard to attract medical graduates may benefit from focussing on improving medical student teaching and experience.