

Career Counseling Activities and Choice of Specialties among Medical Interns

Hatem Mahmoud Shaheen Alahwal, MBBS* Fatin Al Sayes, MB, FRC Path**

Basem Salama El-deek, JMHPE*** Bassem Kurdi, MBBS****

Nebras Abu Al-Hamayel, MBBS**** Ahmed Saleh Barefah, MBBS*

Objective: To identify the specialties chosen by medical interns and factors influencing their choices during academic year of 2009.

Setting: King Abdulaziz University Hospital.

Design: Questionnaire study.

Method: A questionnaire adopted from the American Graduate Council was distributed to 250 medical interns. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 16 (2005).

Result: One hundred and fifty-one questionnaires were completed with a response rate of 60%. Hundred and thirteen (75%) of students are planning to become certified in one of the different subspecialties, see figure 1. Seventeen (11.3%) favored internal medicine followed by anesthesia, 11 (7.3%). Pathology, cardiac surgery, dermatology, general surgery and occupational medicine ranked third, 10 (6.7%), see figure 2. Plastic and orthopedic surgeries were not among their interest.

Eighteen (12%) had been engaged in in-house electives, 14 (9.3%) had accessed the websites; the two had been found the most useful tools in helping students in their specialty choices. Career planning programs, careers availability on medicine websites, group presentations, career planning workshops and courses were not considered by students while choosing their career mainly due to unavailability, see table 1.

Personal interest was the most important factor which had strongly influenced students' specialty choices, 109 (73%), see table 2. Family expectations and the length of residency training programs had minor influence.

Conclusion: The lack of physicians in some specialties where should be addressed. Establishing a career advising committee at KAU is advised. This committee should focus on medical students during their final clinical years and during internship rotations putting in perspective the national health problems in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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