

Impact of self-selected study module on medical students' career choices

Lockwood P, McElhinney Z, Curry, N

Undergraduate Tayside Centre for General Practice, University of Dundee, UK

p.lockwood@dundee.ac.uk, z.c.mcelhinney@dundee.ac.uk,
n.curry@dundee.ac.uk

Introduction

A review of the literature suggests that positive experiences in a remote and rural practice increases the likelihood that medical students will go on to practice in rural areas (Dunbabin and Levitt, 2003). This finding is reinforced by Hancock, Steinbach, Nesbitt, Adler, and Auerswald (2009) when they conducted a qualitative study and found that a significant factor that practitioners cited in choosing remote and rural locations to work was undergraduate exposure in this environment. There is little information published on how much undergraduate exposure is needed to influence the students' choice.

The University of Dundee recently started a two week student selected component for third medical students. The students spent the two weeks split between a rural practice and a rural hospital that had significant GP input.

This study explored how a short time in rural practice influences the career intentions of third year medical students.

The study

Six third year medical students who spent 2 weeks in rural practice were given a questionnaire to complete. Three researchers did a thematic analysis on the questionnaires before comparing and agreeing the themes identified.

Results

The return rate for the questionnaires was 100%.

Nearly all the students indicated that doing the attachment either: increased their intention to do general practice as a career or made them change their original career intentions to general practice.

Several students had started to consider a career in a rural setting as a specific choice and increased their understanding of rural general practice through shadowing.

Reasons for change in career intentions



Conclusions

Two weeks in a rural general practice setting may provide enough undergraduate exposure to increase the possibility that students will consider general practice and rural medicine as a potential career.