

## WHY BECOME A DOCTOR? EVALUATION OF MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS FOR SELECTING MEDICAL PROFESSION AS CAREER

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**ABSTRACT:** After pre-university course, students have to take an important decision regarding their career depending on their interest, family aspirations, past experiences and their limited knowledge of various careers. The objective of the study was to evaluate the various reasons of the students to choose medical career. A semi-structured questionnaire was given to 100 first MBBS students of A J Institute of Medical Sciences, Mangalore and the responses were statistically analyzed. The majority of students (93%) have chosen the medical profession to serve the poor and needy, out of their own interest. Nearly 45% of students have one doctor in family. 10% saw their near ones suffering from chronic illness or cancer, 3% were themselves suffering from health problems, 2% were influenced by the lack of health care in rural areas.

**KEYWORDS:** Medicine as profession; career; motivational factors; first year medical students.

**INTRODUCTION:** India has the highest number of medical colleges in the world (HYPERLINK \l "Med11").<sup>1</sup> The authorities in India have chosen this unprecedented increase in medical colleges to respond to the increasing health needs of country. As per MCI annual report 2012,<sup>2</sup> the annual admission capacity of the medical colleges in the country is staggering 440502). To fill these medical seats there are various entrance exams at university/ state/ national levels and students have to fare well in any such exams to get an entry into a medical school. Every year new set of students enter the medical schools to become doctors in due course of time. There may be several reasons behind students' attitudes towards choosing medical career. Though there is large number of medical seats available and every year these seats are completely filled up, there remains an essential question as to what's driving the students to take medical profession. This study aims at determining the motivations of students to choose 'medicine' as career option.

Number of recent studies has shown light on impetuses of students to enter a medical or dental school, or opting out other basic courses and technical courses from their future. There are many factors considered as important in guiding a student to choose medical profession as career option. Social factors like desire for helping others, alleviating others' pain; personal factors like previous confrontation with health system, prior diseases; cognitive reasons like desire for biological sciences, inquisitiveness about ones' own body; socioeconomic factors, family influence and many others may be named (HYPERLINK \l "Sim")<sup>3,4</sup> (HYPERLINK \l "Bai").<sup>5</sup> A study having considering the socioeconomic status and ethnicity of students says that most students have doctors in their families).<sup>6</sup> Some students might have taken the medical profession even after completely aware of the difficulties and length of the course. Studies are done to investigate the any gender differences among medical students in choosing the career as it was thought long

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since that personality profile is not suitable to become a doctor (HYPERLINK \l "Lui05").<sup>6</sup> Lifestyle and income have become more important to medical students in their career choice).<sup>7</sup> A study investigates the motivational factors for selecting medical profession among interns of a south Indian medical college and concludes that passion for the profession and 'parents wish' are top reasons (HYPERLINK \l "See")<sup>8</sup>

The current estimated doctor population ratio in India is 1:1700 as compared to a world average of 1.5: 10001) indicating India needs more qualified medical professionals. To become an efficient medical doctor one had to work hard, lose leisure and family time, endure lengthier periods of training both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, stay updated throughout life and stay in contact with ill and suffering people. In spite of many 'negative' factors, students continue to choose medical profession in most places year after year in large numbers and no seat in any medical school go vacant! The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons for choosing medical profession as career option by students.

**METHODOLOGY:** A semi-structured questionnaire was developed based on previous surveys investigating motivational factors among medical students towards career choice and pre-tested among small group of non-participants to assess the feasibility of the study. Questionnaire was administered to the 100 first year medical students of A J Institute of Medical Sciences, Mangalore, India over three days in divided batches during March 2013. Informed consent from the students and also institutional clearance for the study was obtained. This time during their course was selected to ensure that students have exposed themselves to the medical profession and better prepared for answering questionnaire. All 100 students have consented, participated and completed the survey. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS13 Fisher's exact test was used to assess statistical significance. P values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS:** The mean age of the participants was 18.5 ( $\pm$  0.6). There were 48 male students and 52 female students. Table 1 depicts the reasons for selecting medical career. Serving humanity (97%) especially poor and needy (93%) was the top reason selected by the students for choosing medical profession. 80% of students said they want to become doctors because this profession commands respect in society. 35% of them like to have 'Dr.' in prefix and 11% likes to wear stethoscope or apron. There were no gender differences among preferences ( $p > 0.5$ ).

**Among the 15% who were motivated by previous incidents;**

- 10% saw their near ones suffering from chronic illness or cancer.
- 3% were themselves suffering from health problems.
- 2% were influenced by the lack of health care in rural areas.

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Reasons to become Doctor	Males	Females	Total
Serve humanity	43	45	97
Serve poor and needy	46	47	93
Wide job opportunity	27	27	54
Prefix Dr	16	19	35
Visited gen hosp	10	11	21
Previous Incident	8	7	15
Like Steth/apron	4	7	11
Own Nursing Home	2	3	5

Table 1: Reasons to become Doctor

91 students (40 males and 51 females) have taken this profession out of their own interest. 7 students agree that their family 'pressurized' them into a medical school.

Influence	Males	Females	Total
Own interest	40	51	91
Teachers influence	2	0	2
Family Influence	4	1	5
Family pressure	6	1	7

Table 2: Factors influencing students' choice as 'Doctor'

45 students have at least one doctor in the family. Parents of 22 students are doctors. At least 30 students agree that they may chose engineering over medicine if they were given a second chance. 52 students have someone as role model out of which 24 students consider their parents as role model.

Dr in family	Males	Females	Total
Parents	11	11	22
Brother/sister	8	10	18
Grandparents	1	4	5
Relatives	16	22	38
None	15	19	34

Table 3: Doctor in family

Alternate career	Males	Females	Total
Engineer	16	14	30
Medical related	3	11	14
Doctor	1	3	04
No response	9	14	23
Others	18	21	39

Table 4: Alternate career if given a second chance

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Role model	Males	Females	Total
Family member	12	12	24
Dr. Devi Shetty	06	04	10
None	29	19	48
Others	05	13	18

Table 5: Role model

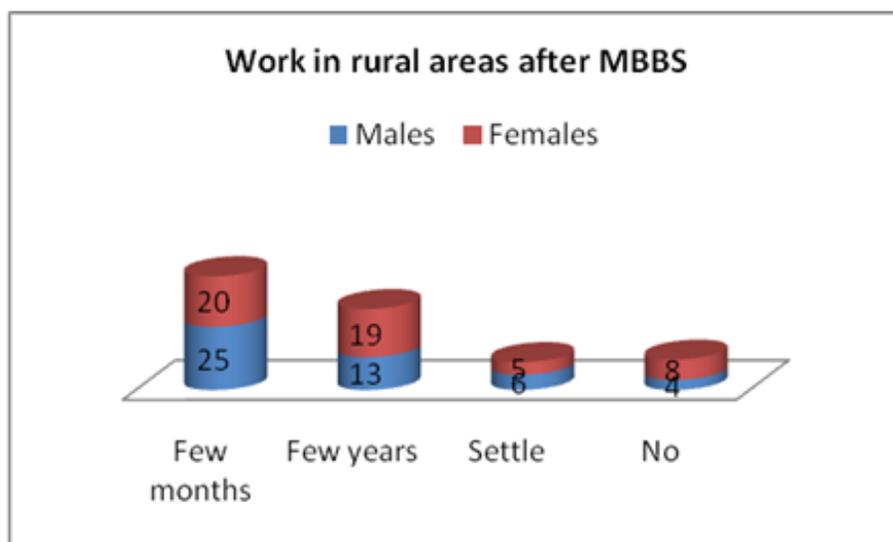


Figure 1

**DISCUSSION:** In the present study participants have said that serving the poor and needy as the motivation for their selection of medical profession. This is in accordance with similar studies in India and abroad (HYPERLINK \l "Kum")<sup>9,10</sup> (HYPERLINK \l "Cha").<sup>11</sup> 'Passion for the profession' is the most common reason why the subjects chose medicine as a career in contrast to 'serving humanity' according to study conducted among interns of a south Indian medical college.<sup>8</sup> The shift in priority as witnessed that study may be because of the difference in the participants. In a similar study conducted in a medical college Delhi, serving humanity was selected by 82% of students as driving motto for medical career (HYPERLINK \l "Lal").<sup>12</sup> In contrast, a study conducted Ahmedabad, reported only 8% of students wants to serve the poor.<sup>13</sup> These findings probably point towards the attitudinal shift among the students as they progress in their MBBS course. A study comparing motivational differences among dental and medical students regarding profession chosen says that former were significantly more concerned about status and security and later are concerned towards patient care, skill development and interest in science (HYPERLINK \l "MLC02").<sup>14</sup> A study among Iranian dental interns also says that the most common reason for students selecting the profession was to enter a prestigious profession with high social status.<sup>15</sup> A study in Turkey says prestige, money, and personal development are important factors in career decision-making among medical students (HYPERLINK \l "Mus").<sup>16</sup>

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The current study clearly states that majority of students have selected medical course out of their own interest. Contrastingly a study among first year students from Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa of Pakistan says that 27% students were 'forced' into a medical school by their parents.<sup>17</sup> A study conducted in Ireland also reported financial gains as a statistically significant factor for male students compared to female students in choosing the profession (HYPERLINK \l "McH").<sup>18</sup>

The primary limitation of this study is that it is conducted in a private medical college and hence the findings cannot be generalized to fresh students among all medical colleges. Though out of 44000 medical seats, 24000 MBBS admissions are in such private medical colleges, the 'elite' group of students who fare well in competitive entrances will end up preferably in government medical colleges and their reasons for selecting medical profession may be different and is not accounted in the present study. It has been reported by many authors that there is a difference in career perceptions and choices between private-sector medical students compared to those from the public-sector.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The motivations behind selecting medical profession among first year students were explored using a semi-structured questionnaire in a south Indian private medical college. Majority of students have selected this profession to serve the poor and needy; on their own interest; have medical backup in the family; and willing to do rural service at least for few months after their course.

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