

The MSOD Project

The MSOD project is a nationally coordinated project for tracking medical students through medical school and into prevocational and vocational training. All Australian and New Zealand medical schools are involved in the project. In Australia, the project is currently funded by Health Workforce Australia and previously by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. It is a collaboration of key stakeholder organizations representing students, postgraduate education and training, rural, Indigenous Health, and workforce planning.

Objectives

To obtain information on career intentions of all medical students in Australia and New Zealand, with particular reference to vocational career choices, and intended geographic location of practice.

Design

Longitudinal cohort surveys undertaken at commencement of medical school studies (Commencing Medical Students Questionnaire (CMSQ), at completion of medical school (Exit Questionnaire (EQ), and in postgraduate years (Postgraduate Year Questionnaires (PGY) 1, 3, 5 and 8.

Sequential commencing medical student cohorts are enrolled in both countries. Further information is collected directly from medical schools on student enrolments, educational and elective placements.

Setting

All Australian and New Zealand medical schools.

Participants

Participants are students and graduates from all Australian and New Zealand medical Schools. Results presented here are based only on participants from Australian medical schools.

Main outcomes measures

Selected outcome measures are:

- Career choices nominated by commencing and completing medical students.
- Profiles of career choices by gender of participants, and by participation in undergraduate entry medical school programmes and graduate entry medical school programmes.
- Future preferred location of practice and intention to practice in regional and rural environments.

Results

The minimum dataset commencing questionnaires were first administered in three Australian medical schools in 2005. From 2008 onwards, commencing medical students in all 18 Australian medical schools have been invited to participate. From 2005 – 2011, 27,403 questionnaire responses have been submitted to the project.

Number of respondents: 18,661 respondents were commencing medical students (7 consecutive cohort years, and 5,690 respondents were completing medical students (4 cohort years) (Table 1).

Response rates: for commencing medical students have been greater than 94% since inception of the project. The eligible cohort response rate for completing students is 83%.

Gender of respondents: the gender of respondents, by type of medical programme is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Number of respondents; CMSQ: commencing medical student questionnaire EQ: completing medical student questionnaire PGY1, PGY3: postgraduate year 1/3 questionnaires

Survey	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
CMSQ	878	2043	2688	3220	3157	3113	3562	18661
EQ				262	894	1978	2556	5690
PGY1					319	927	1531	2777
PGY3							275	275
	878	2043	2688	3482	4370	6018	7924	27403

Table 2. Gender of respondents (all students, and by type of medical programme).

	N	Female	Male
All		53.5%	46.6%
Graduate entry	9,113	51.6%	48.4%
Undergraduate (UG) entry	9,548	55.1%	44.9%
Graduate in UG entry	616	55.0%	45.0%

chi² p<0.001

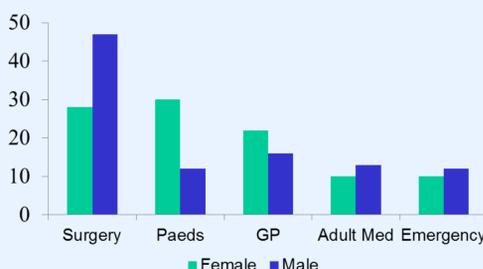


Figure 1. CMSQ top five vocational choices by gender, n = 9,393

Results continued

Career choices of respondents: the top five vocational choices for those responding to the career choice question in the CMSQ, EQ and PGY 1 questionnaire responses are shown in Table 3. The top five choices by gender, and type of medical programme, for the CMSQ and EQ are shown in Figures 1 - 4.

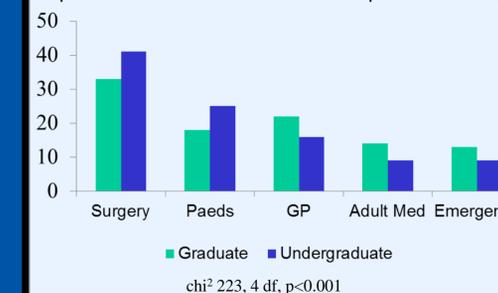


Figure 2. CMSQ top five vocational choices by graduate / undergraduate program, n = 9,394

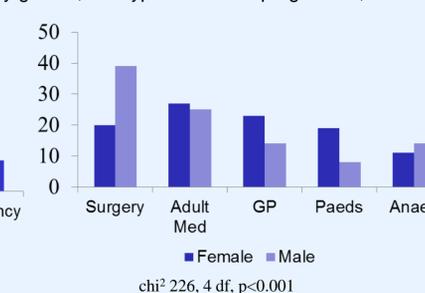


Figure 3. EQ top five vocational choices by gender, n = 3,211

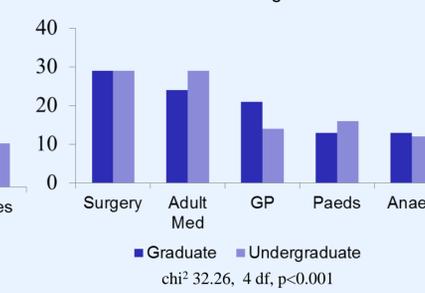


Figure 4. EQ top five vocational choices by graduate / undergraduate programme, n = 3,339

Among the top 5 stated career choices for both commencing students and completing students, greater proportions of graduate entry programme students stated that they were interested in general practice than undergraduate entry programme students. Gender differences, and differences by medical school programme, were seen in the top five vocational choices in both the CMSQ and the EQ.

Location of future practice: 72% (12,823 / 17,708) of commencing medical students responding to the question on location of their preferred future medical practice stated that they wished to practise in future in capital cities or in a major urban centre. For completing medical students, 82% (4,422 / 5,378) responding to the question stated that they would prefer to practise in the future in capital cities or in a major urban centre.

Rural background and rural experiences during medical school: In the CMSQ students were asked to state whether they considered themselves as having a rural background. Of 16,918 responses to this question, 3,622 (21%) students stated that they considered they had a rural background. Slightly more female students considered they were from a rural background (Table 4).

Commencing students who considered themselves to be from a rural background were more likely to state that they wished to practice in regional and rural locations (Table 5). Completing medical students who had extended (910 hours or more) placements in a regional or rural setting while at medical school were also more likely to state that they wished to practice in regional and rural locations (Table 6).

Table 4. CMSQ rural background by gender

	Female	Male
No	7,021 (77%)	6,275 (80%)
Yes	2,082 (23%)	1,540 (20%)

chi² 25.05, p<0.001

Table 5. CMSQ career location by rural background

	Metropolitan	Regional/Rural
No	10,450 (89%)	1,214 (39%)
Yes	1,267 (11%)	1,934 (61%)

chi² 3,763; p<0.001

Table 6. EQ career location by rural placement hours

	Metropolitan	Regional/Rural
No	3,430 (95%)	542 (83%)
Yes	171 (5%)	109 (17%)

chi² 129; p<0.001

Conclusions

The Medical Schools Outcomes Database and Longitudinal Tracking (MSOD) Project is a longitudinal tracking project, involving all of a nation's medical schools, which prospectively seeks information on vocational career intentions and intentions for geographic location of practice. Differences have been found in the top 5 vocational choices for commencing and for completing medical students by gender, and by type of medical programme undertaken (undergraduate entry/ postgraduate entry). In the Australian context, high proportions of medical students wish to practice in the future in capital cities and large urban centres, and this proportion increased between commencement of medical school and completion of medical studies in the cohorts studied. The future years of the Project will add greater numbers to the longitudinal study cohorts, and will describe changes, if any, between intentions during medical school and during postgraduate training with respect to eventual vocational practice outcomes

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For further information

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