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INFLUENCES ON CAREER CHOICE: WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE CAREER CHOICE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS?

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Objectives and Purpose of Study:

Over the past decade, the top career choice of Canadian medical graduates (CMG) has been in family medicine, surgery, and internal medicine. The purpose of this study is to uncover what factors influenced graduate's career choice in family medicine, surgery, and internal medicine.

Data Sources & Study Design:

The Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS), is a not-for-profit organization that works in close cooperation with the medical community to provide an electronic application and computer match for entry into postgraduate medical training throughout Canada.

This longitudinal study uses data from CaRMS' Post-Match Survey of Canadian Medical Graduates. The goal of the survey is to address issues concerning medical graduates. The survey focuses on the following issues: post-graduate training and career plans, factors that influence their decision to train and practice in a particular discipline and location, and socio-demographic characteristics. This study looks at factors that influence career plans.

Emerging Findings:

Differences in interest and career choice have been found between family medicine, surgery, and internal medicine. From 2003 – 2012, interest in family medicine increased (8.9% increase) while interest in surgery decreased (3.9% decrease), and little change was found in interest for internal medicine (0.2% decrease). Differences in factors that influence career decisions have also been found between specialities. In choosing their career, teaching opportunities were important for CMGs interested in internal medicine (81% of CMGs interested in internal medicine considered teaching opportunities important), compared to CMGs interested in surgery (74%) or family medicine (59%). On the other hand, work-life balance was an important consideration in choosing a career for CMGs going into family medicine (72%) compared to internal medicine (57%) and surgery (47%).

Conclusions:

The goal of this study is to look at differences in how medical graduates make their career choices. Graduate discipline choice is an important determinant of the distribution of specialties and associated training locations across the country. Understanding the characteristics associated with career choice can assist residency institutions in determining the characteristics, motivations, and needs of residency applicants.