

AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL SCHOOLS OUTCOMES DATABASE AND LONGITUDINAL TRACKING (MSOD) PROJECT

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The Medical Schools Outcomes Database and Longitudinal Tracking (MSOD) Project aims to determine career objectives of all medical students in Australia, with particular reference to specialist career choices, and intended geographic location of practice. The project is longitudinal, with continuing enrolment of consecutive annual cohorts of commencing medical students.

The project provides minimum dataset questionnaires for all commencing medical students in Australia. Questionnaires are then provided at completion of medical school, and in the first and third postgraduate years. Further questionnaires are planned for postgraduate years five and eight.

The Project enrolled its first commencing medical students in 2005. All 18 Australian medical schools have provided questionnaires to their students from 2008 onwards. Questionnaire completion rates for the Commencing Questionnaire have been greater than 94% since inception.

From 2005 – 2011, 27,403 questionnaire responses were provided. 18,661 respondents were commencing medical students (7 consecutive cohort years), and 5,690 respondents were completing medical students (4 cohort years).

Graduate entry programme commencing medical student numbers were 9,113, and direct entry (undergraduate programmes) commencing student numbers were 9,548. Gender profiles for commencing students for 2005 – 2011 were 51.6% female: 48.4% male for graduate entry programmes, and 55.1% female: 44.9% male for undergraduate entry programmes (χ^2 $p < 0.001$).

For commencing medical students, the three most prevalent career choices were Surgery (27%), Paediatrics and Child Health (16%), and General Practice (14%).

For completing medical students the three most prevalent career choices were Surgery (19%), Adult Medicine (17%), and General Practice (13%).

There were significant differences in profiles of the top five potential career choices for commencing male and female students (χ^2 661, 4 dof, $p < 0.001$). There were also significant differences in the top five potential career choices for commencing students in graduate entry and undergraduate entry programmes (χ^2 223, 4 dof, $p < 0.001$).

Differences existed in the profiles of the top five potential career choices for completing male and female students (χ^2 226, 4 dof, $p < 0.001$), and for completing students in graduate entry and undergraduate entry programmes (χ^2 32, 4 dof, $p < 0.001$).

Commencing and completing female students were more likely to state they wished to pursue careers in General Practice and Paediatrics and Child Health, and less likely to intend to practice Surgery, than male students. Commencing and completing graduate entry programme students were more likely to state that they wished to pursue a career in General Practice.

High proportions of commencing, and completing, medical students stated that they wished to practice in future in capital cities.

Analyses of rural practice intentions showed associations between rural background, and rural experiences during medical school, with intentions for future practice in regional and rural environments.

The MSOD project is the only known prospective longitudinal study involving all medical students at all medical schools in one country. Longitudinal linkage of medical student career intentions with postgraduate specialist training experiences until the eighth postgraduate year, across consecutive annual cohorts, will provide important national information for medical workforce planning and for monitoring of evolving specialist workforce provision.