

Selection of Community Medicine as a subject for Post-Graduation: Students' Perspective

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Abstract

Background: It has been a common observation that medical graduates are often not enthusiastic to choose community medicine as a career. Majority of students who enter in community medicine is not by their genuine interest in the subject but by default.

Aims & Objectives: (1) To explore the views of medical students regarding their career choice.(2) To assess possible reasons for medical students opting for or shying away from community medicine as a career option.

Material and Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out among 3rd& 4th year students and Interns at C.U.SHAH Medical College and Hospital situated in Surendranagar, Gujarat. Self-structured pretested questionnaire was used for collection of data. Out of 250 students 200 students participated for study.

Results: A small number of students opted for preventive and social medicine (15%), selection of Community medicine as a career option was significantly low among males (8%) and students having a doctor in their family (6%).The popular choice among male and female were medical and surgical specialties (50%). Choice of Public health was least among 3rd year students. "Lack of personal satisfaction" ranked topmost in rejection criteria.

Conclusion: The study reveals that there were a lot of misconceptions about the subject; its future prospects, opportunities etc. The peer review about the subject was also not very encouraging. This needs to be changed by making the subject interesting during undergraduate training and making them aware about the opportunities the subject offers.

Keywords: Community medicine; Career option; Medical students

Introduction

Community Medicine is synonymous with Public Health, Preventive Medicine and Social Medicine. It is that field of medicine which is concerned with

the study of health and disease in population of a defined community or group.¹ It helps to identify health problems and needs of the population through community diagnosis and by systemic application of planning, implementation and evaluation of

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health programmes, it seeks to meet the identified needs of a given community.² It has been a common observation that medical graduates are often not enthusiastic to choose public health discipline as a career.³ Public Health had not been attracting the best candidates from the health professions.⁴ Anywhere in India Toppers from PG Medical entrance exam always prefer clinical subjects. Among those who choose Community medicine as their PG subject, higher number them either with low ranks or they left with no other option. As per current data of Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM) number of MD PSM Doctors in India is 4193, which is significantly low in comparison with the need of MD PSM Doctors in India.⁵

Hence this present study carried out to find the possible reasons why medical students are opting for or shying away from Community Medicine as their carrier choice and to find out the possible reasons for their decision.

Materials and Methods

A Cross sectional study was performed at C. U. Shah Medical College and Hospital (CUSMC), Surendranagar. The study subjects consist of Medical students of Third First year, Third Second year (4th year) and Interns of CUSMC. Out of 250 students 200 participated for the study. Those who were absent on study day and who did not want to take part were excluded from the study. Self-structured pre tested questionnaire was used for the collection of data. Ethical approval from the research committee has been taken. There was not any source of funding because none needed. Each data collection form was analyzed twice to run over all errors.

Statistical analysis

The recorded data was compiled and entered in a spreadsheet computer program (Microsoft Excel 2007) and then exported to data editor page of SPSS version 15 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA). For all tests, confidence level and level of significance were set at 95% and 5% respectively.

Results

The study was performed amongst the 3rd year part I, final year students and interns at C.U.Shah

Medical College and Hospital. Out of 250 students 200 were included in the study. Amongst them 106 were boys (53%) and 94 were girls (47%). Figure 1 shows the gender wise selection of Community Medicine for Post-Graduation. Girls (22%) were more attracted towards community medicine as their career choice compared to boys (8%) and it was statistically significant with 'P-value' less than 0.05.

Number of students from 3rd first, final year and internship was 70, 40 and 66. Table 2 shows the year wise response for choosing CM for PG, from which it is clearly seen that final year and internship students' view regarding choosing CM for PG was significantly higher than 3rd year students.

Majority of students (93%) responded that community medicine is an important field (Figure 2a) and most of students (78%) gave positive response regarding Cm as a good subject in Under-graduation (Figure 2b). Although they knew the importance of subject still for very less number of students (15%) community medicine was first career choice (Table 2). Selection of Medicine (27%) and Surgery (24%) stands highest for career choice by students followed by community medicine (15%) and Obs & Gyn (11%).

Figure 4 shows the students' response for choosing CM as a career choice according to their performance in final exam. It seems that attraction towards choosing CM was higher in students who got Second class (28%) in their final exam in compared to First class (6%). Similar difference was shown for choosing CM by students whose family member is doctor (Table 3). Those who belonged to Doctor Family were less likely to choose CM as career choice (6%) in comparison with those who does not belong to Doctor Family (19%). Both results were statistically significant. Figure 5 shows various reasons for choosing CM as a career choice. Among them interest in public health (44%) was the main reason followed by interest in research (33%) and social service (23%).

Table 4 shows various reasons for rejecting CM as a career choice by students, in which "Career in CM/ Public Health will not be satisfying for me" (42%) was the top most reason, followed by "Cannot earn name/ fame equivalent to counterparts in Medicine/ Surgery" (18%) and "I might not be able to earn as much as my counterparts in other clinical subjects" (18%) respectively.

Table 1: Response regarding choosing CM for PG among 3rd first, final year students and interns

Year	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
3 rd year part I	2 (2.85)	68 (97.14)	70 (100)
Final year	18 (28.12)	46 (71.87)	64 (100)
Intern	10 (15.15)	56 (84.84)	66 (100)
Total	30 (15)	170 (85)	200 (100)

Chi-square: 14.838 df: 2 P value: 0.000599

Table 2: Response regarding preferred career choice

Career choice	Response (%)
Community Medicine	30 (15)
General Practice	12 (6)
Medicine	53 (26.5)
Surgery	47 (23.5)
Obs & Gyn	21 (10.5)
Radiology	9 (4.5)
IAS	10 (5)
Ophthalmology	7 (3.5)
Pediatrics	7 (3.5)
Dermatologist	4 (2)
Total	200 (100)

Table 3: Selection of CM as a career choice among student's whose family member is doctor

Family member Doctor	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Yes	4 (6.45)	58 (93.55)	62 (100)
No	26 (18.84)	112 (81.16)	138 (100)
Total	30 (15)	170 (85)	200 (100)

Chi-square: 5.15 df: 1 P value: 0.023

Table 4: Response regarding possible reasons for rejecting CM as a career choice

Reasons	Response (%)
Cannot earn name/fame equivalent to counterparts in medicine/ surgery	31 (18.24)
Career in CM/ Public Health will not be satisfying for me	71 (41.76)
Career in CM/ Public Health will not bring me any recognition in society	9 (5.29)
Lack of info regarding future career prospects after choosing CM	17 (10)
I am not impressed with anyone In this field	3 (1.76)
The subject is looked down by my peers & seniors	3 (1.73)
I have not seen anyone doing well in this field	2 (1.18)
I might not be able to earn as much as my counterparts in other clinical subjects	30 (17.65)
The subject is not projected well by faculty/ postgraduates	1 (0.59)
I have heard of postgraduates/ faculty feeling frustrated after choosing CM	3 (1.76)
Total	170 (100)

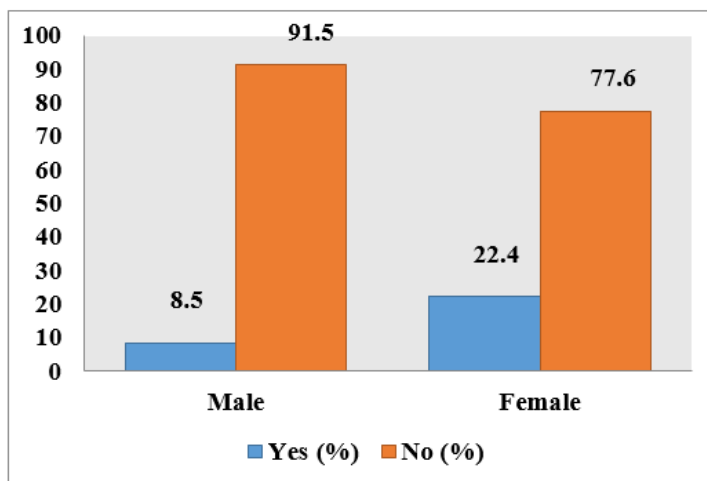


Figure 1: Gender wise selection of Community medicine for PG

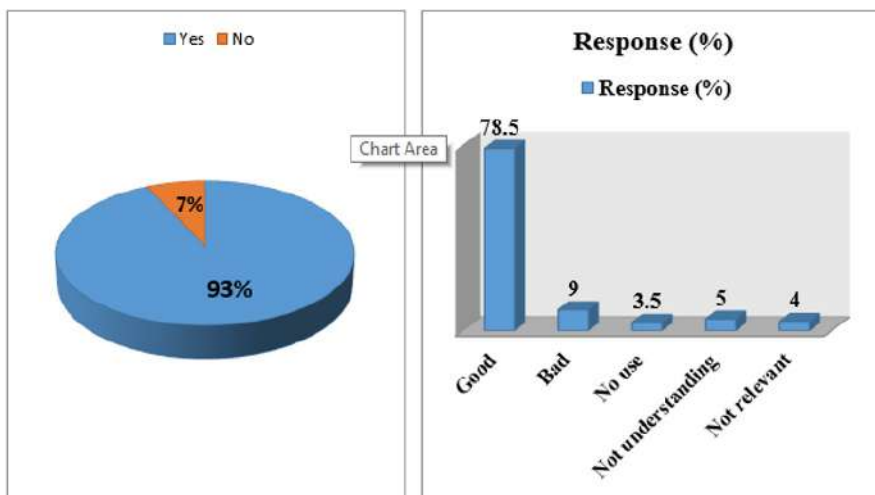


Figure 2a: Response regarding CM as an important field

Figure 2b: Response regarding CM in UG

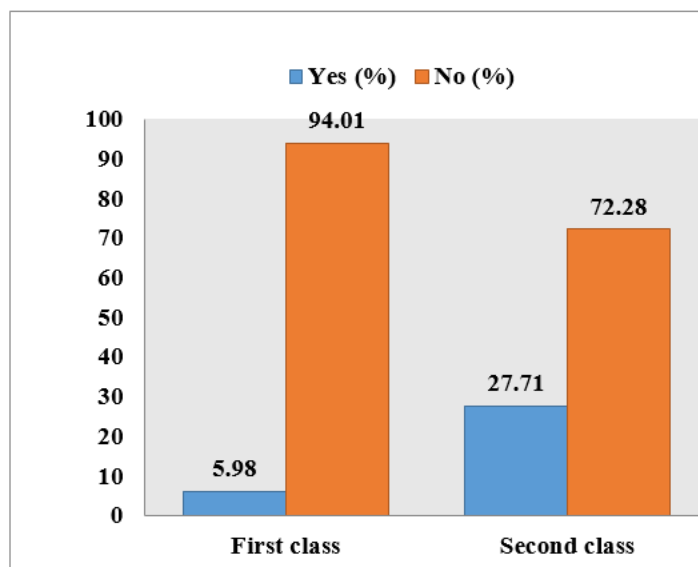


Figure 3: Response regarding students' Performance in final exam for choosing CM as a career choice

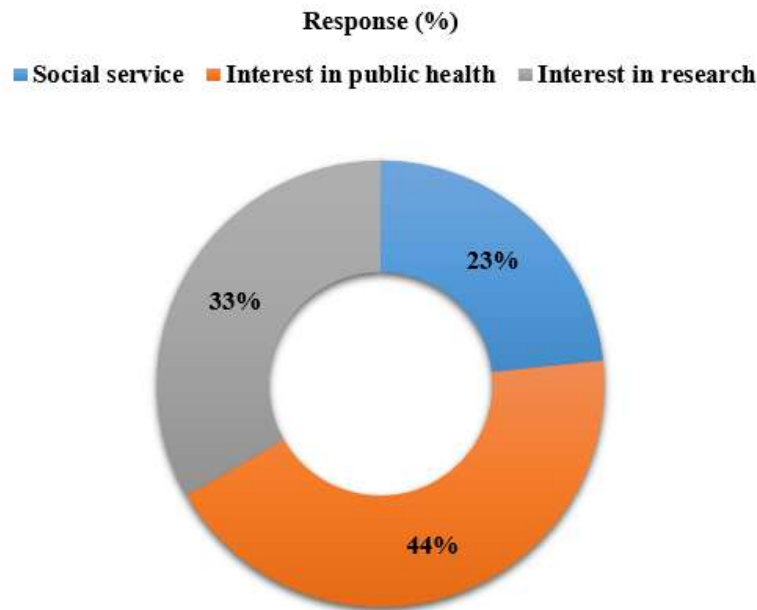


Figure 4: Reasons for choosing CM as a career choice

Discussion

Both type of responses positive and negative seen for choosing community medicine as a career choice among the students of the study. In the current study about 15% students gave positive response for choosing career in community medicine, similar results were found in the study done by Manish kumar singh et al.⁶ Another study done in Bangladesh by Ahmed et al shows that only 3% of medical students opted for community medicine specialties⁷, so clearly there were more positive response compared to study of Ahmed et al. In this study significantly higher number of female students were attracted towards choosing community medicine as a career option in compared to male students. Similar results reported in the Dutch study by Soethout MB.⁸ Medicine and Surgery were the most preferred subjects by the students for their Post-Graduation which was similar to study done by Egenti et al⁹ and Ahmed et al.⁷

The main reason for not choosing PSM as a future choice was "Career in CM/ Public Health will not be satisfying for me" followed by "Career in CM/ Public Health will not be satisfying for me" and "I might not be able to earn as much as my counterparts in other clinical subjects" respectively. Similar findings were seen in the study by Manish and Arvind kumar Singh⁶ and study of Schafer S et al.¹⁰

In current study, statistically significant seen in

those who not having doctor in their family were more likely to choose community medicine in compared to those who belonged to doctor family. Similar results were found in the study done by Manish Kumar et al⁶ and study done in Nepal by Roy B et al.¹¹ There was inverse association seen between getting first class in exam and choosing community medicine and it was statistically significant. Those who got second class in exam were more likely to choose community medicine while those who got first class were less likely to choose it. Study done by Nath Anita, Ingle Gopal and Manish Kumar et al shown the similar result in their study.¹²

Conclusion

Community medicine is the branch which deals with the birth of the medicine to recent advances. It includes every department in some or other manner. So it is necessary to spread the right knowledge about the subject to everyone. It's a wide-spread sea with unlimited opportunities. Although, almost every students in our study consider community medicine as an important field but they are not that much enthusiastic to choose it as a career choice. Even students who came from doctor family they also don't want to choose it, because this subject has been looked down by their parents and peers for future choice. Due to that and also by believing that unsatisfactory career and less name/ fame and money leads to neglect this

subject. Also it has been like a ritual that students who perform well during their under graduation are most probably going to choose clinical side rather than non-clinical. The study reveals that there were a lot of misconceptions about the subject; its future prospects, opportunities etc. The peer review about the subject was also not very encouraging. This needs to be changed by making the subject interesting during undergraduate training and making them aware about the opportunities the subject offers.

Ethical approval was taken from the institutional ethical committee and written

Informed Consent was taken from all the participants.

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Conflict of Interest: None declared

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