



# CAREER ADVICE DURING INDIAN MEDICAL GRADUATE TRAINING – AN URGENT NEED

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## ABSTRACT

To assess the knowledge of future career plan among CRRI students and to explore the need for career advice during undergraduate medical training. A cross-sectional study was performed at Tagore Medical College And Hospital comprising of 101 CRRI students. They were asked to answer 19 item questionnaire after getting informed consent. Results were documented and statistical analysis was done using SPSS 16 software. Response rate is 100%. Among 101 students 69 (68.3%) were females and 32 (31.7%) were males. When asked about their future career plan ,82 students (81.2%) had planned to prepare for the postgraduate medical examination while 2 (1.7%)of them wanted to go abroad and 3( 2.8%)of them to start general practice; 10(9.5%) students didn't have any idea about their future career plan while 4(3.5%)students preferred government service. In general 48 (47.5%)students got information about career advice from friends/seniors ;18 (17.5%)students from family members; 33(32.7%) students from teachers. Majority of them advised to prepare for postgraduate entrance exam. None of them receive any professional career advice and the role of teachers found to be very minimal. So, a critical review by the medical council of India is required to include career advice as a part of undergraduate curriculum and also to train medical teachers professionally in giving career advice.

**Keywords:** Career advice, Indian Medical Graduate, undergraduate curriculum.

## INTRODUCTION

Medical education plays a very important role in educational system of any country. Medical education requires undergraduate students to study a wide range of medical specialties. It is often assumed that students do not make their career preferences until after they have graduated from medical school. After completing medical school, fresh graduates face the dilemma of choosing a field for specialization. They are seldom aware of the scope of each specialty and the number of training spots and slots available for consultants in different specialties[1]. Often they take a decision on the basis of various factors like influence of role models, job opportunities and financial rewards, intellectual challenge in the specialty, and research opportunities in the specialty of choice. [4] Fetching of better income by people of the same branch and advice by peers makes majority of medical students to pursue their specialization in clinical branches like Internal Medicine and Orthopedics, obstetrics and Gynecology, pediatrics, surgery etc and very few to pursue in pre and paraclinical branches like Anatomy, Biochemistry, Community Medicine etc [3]. The lack of proper guidance will gradually create a vacuum of specialists in certain branches which are by and large the backbone of the curriculum of a medical college. This lack of career knowledge among students will also create a qualitative and quantitative deficiency of specialists in various branches like Anatomy, Biochemistry, Community Medicine etc in medical colleges [2]. Students tend to take a branch without interest which will inevitably produce poor quality doctors and academicians.

A number of studies have been done in the West in regarding career options for medical students and their field of interest, but there is very scarce data regarding knowledge about career planning among medical students in India. So, the current study was planned to investigate current knowledge of the CRRI students in choosing their future profession, such as choice of specialty, country preference for the future etc.,

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a cross-sectional study performed among CRRI students at Tagore medical college and hospital, Rathinamangalam, Chennai. The study was approved by the Institutional Review and Ethics Board. A total of 101 students were enrolled in the study. The students who agreed to participate in the study were required to sign an informed consent form. A self-administered questionnaire in English which is the official medium of instruction was given to the student. The questionnaires were distributed and then collected back within 3 days. It was designed incorporating important parameters after extensive literature search. The format of the item in the questionnaire given included both open and closed type questions. It collected data on gender, year of study, reasons for choosing medical profession, medical professionals in the family, future plans for specialization and choice of career abroad etc. The questionnaire was made anonymous to ensure confidentiality. Data was recorded on Microsoft Excel Worksheet and analyzed using SPSS 16. To our knowledge in our country this study is going to be first of its kind regarding need for career advice in Indian medical graduate training.

## OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

The response rate of the students was 100%. Out of 101 students, 69 were females (68.3%) and 32 were males (31.7%). All the students were aged between 21 to 24 years ; majority of them are 22 (n= 57, 56.4%) & 23(n=29, 28.7%) years old.

A total of 57 students(56.4%) had chosen the profession to fulfill their parents wish , 35(34.7%)have chosen their career on their own will and to serve the ailing humanity, while 6 students have chosen this profession to earn and 3 to have Dr as a prefix to their name. Regarding medical background, the presence of family members of participants in medical profession is 34 ( 33.7%).

Regarding inclusion of career advice in undergraduate curriculum , 74 students (73.3%) strongly agree that it is mandatory while 25 students (24.8%) just agree and 2 of them( 1.7 %) disagree for the need for career advice . Among them ,19 students(18.8%) felt that career advice should be given in the first year itself; 19(18.8%) in the second year;16(15.8%) in third year;11(10.9%)in final year and 34 (33.7%)during the CRRI period .

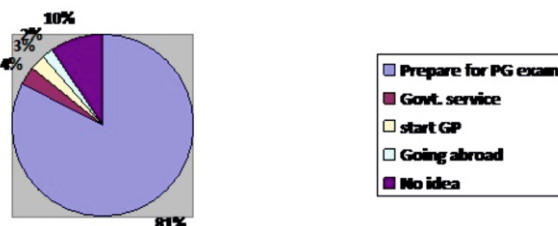


Fig 1.Idea about future career plan

When asked about their future career plan ,82 students (81.2%) had planned to prepare for the postgraduate medical examination while 2 (1.7%)of them wanted to go abroad and 3( 2.8%)of them to start general practice; 10(9.5%) students didn't have any idea about their future career plan while 4(3.5%)students preferred government service(fig 1).

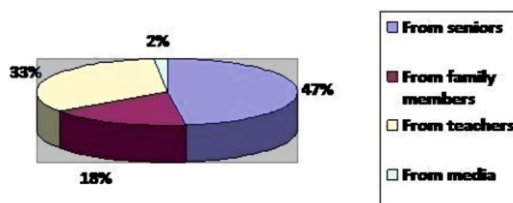


Fig 2 Source of information about future career plan

Regarding source of information about future careers, 48 students(47.5%) got information from their seniors/friends to plan their career; 18(17.8%) from their family members; 33 students(32.7%) from their teachers and 2 students( 1.7%) through media(fig 2).

Only 33 students got career advice from teachers. Among them, 52.2% of the students were advised to prepare for postgraduate entrance examinations; 13.9% of them felt they were confused as they were not given proper information ; 4% of the students received information about scopes of various specialities in medicine; 1% was advised to start general practice.

In a total of 101 students , 88% were aware of the specialities available in medical profession whereas 12% of them were not(fig 3).

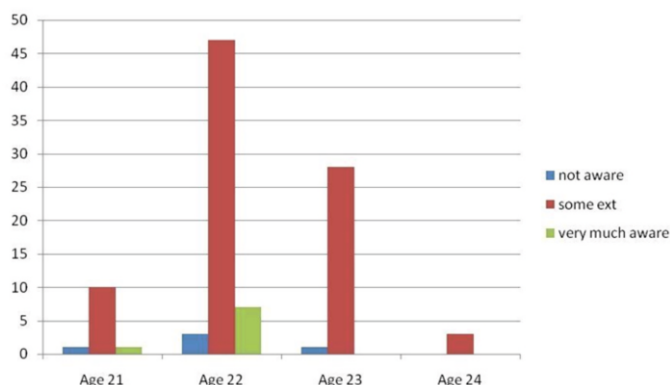


Fig 3 Awareness of career plan

When given the list of all specialities available , 41.6% of students were interested in a medical speciality; 24.8% of them in surgical speciality; 24.8% of them decided to opt for other specialities like anesthesia, radiology, radiotherapy etc. ; 11.9% of them answered that still don't have any idea; and none of the students were ready to opt for pre or paraclinical specialities.

## DISCUSSION :

A futuristic vision regarding medical profession before they join medical college plays an important role in deciding their future career. In our country, a majority of parents wish their wards to become either doctors or engineers. Because the status of a doctor in the society and medicine being a noble profession, parents encourage their children to become doctors from the very early years. For many students, it's a foregone conclusion that if they get very good grades they will surely select medicine as a profession. It was observed in the current study that 57 students (56.4%) chose the profession because their parents wanted them to be doctors, while 35 (34.7%) chose it on their own will and to serve ailing humanity. One earlier study done by Wright B et al in 2004 also reported that the majority of medical students chose Medicine because of personal interest [2] but our study shows parents play a key role in motivating students entering medical profession. In Yousef k et al study in 2008 it was clearly stated that Family influence was a very important factor (65%) in choosing medical profession. But in our study we observed that only 33.7% of students have someone in their immediate family members (parents, siblings or uncle) in medical profession. The main reasons reported by the students for choosing this 'noble' profession were 'to serve ailing humanity' (34.7% responses), 'to have DOCTOR' as prefix (3%) and financial reasons (5.9%). There was no statistical difference between male and female students for choosing the profession for financial reasons. But a study conducted in Ireland that financial gains as a statistically significant factor for male students compared to female students in choosing the profession [5].

Regarding the future career plan after MBBS course, majority of the students (81.2%) decided to go for post graduate entrance examination preparation and 9.8% of students still don't have any idea about their future career plan. This clearly shows that students don't have any idea about the various options available to plan their future career except for post graduate exam preparation. Also, students don't get any professional career advice to plan their future. Majority of them are guided mostly by seniors and friends (47.5%). In our country role of teachers (32.7%) play a very little role in planning their future career unlike foreign countries like UK where they have separate professional bodies for career counseling also the advice given to them were pertaining to the PG entrance exam preparation only. Interestingly when asked about their interest in speciality 41.6% of students are interested to choose medical speciality, 24.8% surgical and 24.8% opt for other clinical speciality. None of the students are ready to opt for pre and para clinical subjects. Already Indian medical colleges are facing ominous deficiency of faculty in branches like anatomy, biochemistry, community medicine etc and if this situation persist then this definitely impact upon the fundamental structure of our medical education. In our study it has been noted that 10% of students don't have any idea about the options available and also they didn't have proper guidance by professionally trained people about all the available options after MBBS course with their pros and cons. Preferably all these guid-

ance should be given to the students before they complete the undergraduate course so that they can plan their future career before they complete MBBS. When asked about the inclusion of career advice in undergraduate curriculum majority of students (98.1%) agree that it is mandatory.

## Strength of this study:

It is the first of its kind in our country which demonstrates the current knowledge of future career plan among CRRRI students and also the need for career counseling during undergraduate medical training.

## Limitations:

There is a selection bias as all the students are from a single institution and also the sample size is small. Further extensive research is needed to generalize the findings of the study to a vast population.

## CONCLUSION

When a student pursues any branch without proper planning and interest, it is very difficult to produce quality doctors to society. To overcome this, career advice is the best way to let each student know every aspect of all specialities of medical field in depth so that they can take their final decision in a more wise and productive manner. So, a critical review by the Medical Council of India is required to include career advice as a part of undergraduate curriculum and also to train medical teachers professionally in giving career advice.

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