

Comparison of Medical Students Consideration for Choosing a Specialty in 2010 and 2020

Hanna S. Schroeder¹, Alon Shacham², Shimon Amar³, Charles Weissman², and Josh E. Schroeder²

¹Hebrew University of Jerusalem Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine

²Hebrew University of Jerusalem School of Medicine

³Ben-Gurion University Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School

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Abstract

Introduction: Understanding "what is most important" to medical-students can help improve residence learning and working conditions. Such information is needed to facilitate policy planning that will encourage the next generation of physicians to specialize in medical-fields that are experiencing shortages. The hypothesis was, there are significant changes in medical students' preferences, regarding the considerations for choosing a medical specialty in 2020 as compared to students a decade earlier. *Methods:* A time comparison cross-sectional study of 5th-year medical students from two universities took place in 2010 and 2020. A questionnaire was used to examine various aspects of the specialty selection process. *Results :* 335 medical-students answered the survey (237 and 98 in 2010 and 2020, respectively). Medical students in 2020 in comparison to 2010, were 2.26 time less likely to choose a residency because of its potential for a high income ($P<0.05$), had significantly more interest in residencies with greater teaching (98.8% vs 82.9%, $P<0.05$) and increased responsibility/chance to make clinical decisions on their own (67.9% vs 51.6%, $P<0.05$). There were criteria which were important to both the 2010 and 2020 students, such as, choosing a bedside specialty (70.2%vs 67.9%, NS), an interesting and challenging residency (95.2%v s 91.3%, NS) and interest in a specialty that involved working in the operating room (29.8% vs 32.6%, NS). *Conclusions:* These results reinforce the idea of avoiding stereotypes based on the generational cohort and the importance of exploring the needs and motivations of medical students. Notably, we found that the 2020 medical-students were more interested than their predecessors in residencies with much resident teaching and more responsibility/making clinical decisions on their own. In addition, we found that selection criteria such as, importance of choosing a specialty that one finds interesting and challenging, are universal over time.

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