

Perception towards General Medicine as a Subject and Career Option among Medical Students in a Medical College, Indore (M.P)Chetan Mathur¹, Snehal Mishra², Apurv Bhupendra Thakur³, Ritesh Upadhyay⁴¹Assistant Professor, Department of General Medicine, Sri Aurobindo Medical College and PG Institute, Indore, MP²DM Nephrology (Pursuing), Department of Nephrology, Sri Aurobindo Medical College and PG Institute, Indore, MP³Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Sri Aurobindo Medical College and PG Institute, Indore, MP⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Chhindwara Institute of Medical Sciences, Chhindwara, MP

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Abstract:

Introduction: General Medicine (Internal medicine), is a medical specialty that deals with the diagnosis and medical, as opposed to surgical, treatment of diseases of adults. The educational environment in many institutions is particularly difficult for general medicine, both because the current emphasis on technical skills obscures patients' and learners' real needs and because complex patients on general medicine services are now so ill and their turnover so rapid. The study aimed to assess the attitude towards General Medicine as a Subject and Career options as well as factors that may affect it.

Methodology: The was a cross-sectional study conducted in a tertiary care institute, using a predesigned semi structured questionnaire based on questions from previously such conducted studies. Chi Squared test was applied to the appropriate data.

Results: A total of 204 students participated in the study, of which 82 (40.2%) were males and 120 (58.82%) were females. Students would opt for General Medicine as a career option due to getting a good salary, good prestige, career satisfaction and recognition in society. 130 (63.73%) students claimed to have understood the concept of General Medicine and 148 (72.55%) felt that they had realized the relevance of General Medicine to the health issue, and 135 (66.18%). A large number of students felt that they would be satisfied by a career in General Medicine (143 students i.e. 70.1 %) and that they had been provided with enough information regarding General Medicine as a future career prospect (145 students i.e. 71.08%). Most students had seen someone do well in the field of General medicine (139 students i.e. 68.14%) and were impressed by someone in the field of General Medicine (127 students i.e. 62.25%) students said that the knowledge they had gained in the Dept. of General Medicine would be useful for their careers as doctors.

Conclusion: A relatively high percentage of students claimed to understand the concept of general medicine, claimed to have gleaned the relevance of the subject in the field of medicine. Most of the students did say that they usually attended the General Medicine as much as those of other disciplines. However there was a large section of the students who definitely felt that most of the classes tended to be monotonous and not very stimulating in a general sense. The study seems to point out that the roles that preceptors and other faculty members, including the post graduate students may actually influence the students in selecting the subject as a career choice. Presence of Scientific Prestige seems to highly influence the choice of General Medicine as a career choice.

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Introduction

General Medicine (Internal medicine), is a medical specialty that deals with the diagnosis and medical, as opposed to surgical, treatment of diseases of adults. It is broadly identical with the practice of the physician, as opposed to that of the surgeon. Internal medicine, which deals with the entire

patient rather than a particular organ system, is in effect the parent of other medical specialties such as cardiology, dermatology, and gastroenterology. The development of internal medicine as a scientific discipline begins with Thomas Sydenham's concept of disease, articulated in the

17th century. Sydenham closely observed clinical phenomena at the patient’s bedside and conceived for the first time the possibility of a variety of distinct “diseases,” as opposed to general illness caused by the imbalance of “humours,” which was then the prevailing theory of disease causation. [1]

Academic general medicine has several key strengths that can be leveraged to respond to these trends. These include values, innovation, leadership and transformation. Academic general internists have a strong sense of shared values around the key domains of patient centeredness, collegial support and mentorship, critical thinking and inquiry, partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration, and social responsibility and equity in health and health care. [2,3] The educational environment in many institutions is particularly difficult for general medicine, both because the current emphasis on technical skills obscures patients' and learners' real needs and because complex patients on general medicine services are now so ill and their turnover so rapid. [4] The number of career specialties in medicine has dramatically increased, parallel to the expansion of knowledge in different fields. Given the numerous and diverse options to choose from, the factors that influence the preferences of medical students and interns in India are not well understood. It is known that even at the time of entering a program, medical students have several preconceived notions about the profession and that there is also a general inclination towards certain specialties. [5]

Objectives

1. To assess the general perception of students towards general medicine as a subject, including their opinions on the current study pattern.

2. To see if General medicine is considered as a preferred career option among medical students.
3. To assess what factors may impact the career choice.

Methodology

Study Design: This was a cross sectional study. It was carried out in the Dept. of Medicine among students who were posted in the Department in Lectures and Clinical Postings. The duration of the study was from June 2023 to December 2023.

Study Population: All students who were posted in the Department of General Medicine from Phase Three (First Part), Phase Three (Second Part), were given the option to participate in the study, after taking informed consent. First years and Second Years were not included in the study as it was deemed that they had not had sufficient exposure to the subject. Interns were also excluded as it was presumed that they had already decided on their respective career choices. A total of 204 Students consented to participate in the study and returned completed questionnaires.

Study Tool: A predesigned, pretested, semi structured questionnaire was used, consisting of questions which were validated by the senior faculty members of the institute. The questionnaire was designed based on questionnaires from previously conducted studies [6,7,8,9,10,11, 12] Data was collected by the principal investigator after obtaining permission from the respective faculty members at the end of their Lectures/ Clinical Postings for 10-15 minutes.

Study Analysis: Data was entered into the computer by the Principal Investigator. The answers to the questions were presented as appropriate proportions and chi square test was applied on the variables. P value of <0.05 was considered significant.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Study Participants (n=204)

	3 rd Year Part 1	3 rd Year Part 2	Total
Male	42	42	84
Female	61	59	120
Total	103	101	204

Table 2: Perception of students towards General Medicine as a subject (n=204)

Question	Agree					Disagree				
	3(P1)		3(P2)		T	3(P1)		3(P2)		T
	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F	
Have you understood the main concept of General Medicine?	20	28	35	47	130	22	33	78	112	74
Have you realized the relevance of General Medicine to the real health issue?	25	33	36	54	148	15	22	68	55	56
Do you feel that your skill have improved in solving problems in General Medicine?	20	37	21	27	105	22	24	21	33	99
Do you feel that the knowledge and experience that you gained in General Medicine will be useful for your career as a doctor?	18	27	36	54	135	24	34	66	55	69

Was the sequencing of topics in General Medicine logical?	1 6	2 4	2 8	3 4	10 2	2 6	3 7	1 4	2 5	10 2
Were the General Medicine lectures interesting/stimulating?	2 1	3 4	1 4	2 5	94	2 1	2 7	2 8	3 4	11 0
Were the General Medicine lectures lengthy?	1 8	2 7	1 5	2 4	84	2 4	3 4	2 7	3 5	12 0
Were the General Medicine lectures too many or too few in number?	2 2	3 0	1 6	3 0	98	2 0	3 1	2 6	2 9	10 6
Did you attend General Medicine lectures as often as you did for other courses?	2 6	3 2	3 1	4 8	13 7	1 6	2 9	1 1	1 1	67
Do you have completed notes in General Medicine?	2 2	3 5	1 3	2 7	97	2 0	2 6	2 9	3 2	10 7
Were you encouraged to participate in the classroom?	2 4	3 4	2 5	3 1	11 4	1 8	2 7	1 7	2 8	90
Do you feel that General Medicine has a high status in the medical field?	1 6	3 5	2 4	3 6	11 1	2 6	2 6	1 8	2 3	93

Table 3: Perception of Students towards General Medicine as a Career option (n=204)

Question	Agree					Disagree				
	3(P1)		3(P2)		T	3(P1)		3(P2)		T
	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F	
Would you consider General Medicine as a career option? 16	3 3	4 4	1 8	2 5	12 0	9 7	1 4	2 4	3 4	8 4
Do you feel that General Medicine will provide a salary which is comparable to other professions? 17	3 6	4 1	1 9	2 1	11 7	6 0	2 3	2 8	3 7	8 7
Do you feel that General Medicine has a high level of scientific prestige equivalent to other specialties? 18	3 5	4 5	1 7	2 5	12 2	7 6	1 5	2 4	3 4	8 2
Do you feel that you can achieve fame in GENERAL MEDICINE as compared to other disciplines? 19	3 6	3 4	2 3	3 4	12 7	6 9	2 4	1 9	2 5	7 7
Do you feel you will be satisfied with a career in GENERAL MEDICINE? 20	3 3	4 0	3 1	3 9	14 3	9 1	2 1	1 0	2 1	6 1
Do you think a career in GENERAL MEDICINE will bring you recognition in society? 21	2 0	4 0	2 1	2 8	10 9	2 2	2 1	2 1	3 1	9 5
Is there enough information regarding GENERAL MEDICINE as a future prospect? 22	2 8	4 1	3 2	4 4	14 5	1 4	2 0	1 0	1 5	5 9
Are you impressed with anyone in the field of GENERAL MEDICINE? 23	2 3	4 7	2 3	3 4	12 7	1 9	1 4	1 9	2 5	7 7
Have you seen anyone doing well in the field of GENERAL MEDICINE? 24	2 8	4 4	3 1	3 6	13 9	1 4	1 7	1 1	2 3	6 5
Is the pay scale in GENERAL MEDICINE more as compared to other disciplines? 25	1 9	3 5	3 1	4 4	12 9	2 3	2 6	1 1	1 5	7 5
Was the subject projected well by faculty and postgraduate students? 26	1 8	3 5	2 9	4 7	12 9	2 4	2 6	1 3	1 2	7 5
Do you think Faculty and Postgraduates are satisfied after choosing GENERAL MEDICINE? 27	1 9	3 5	2 5	3 5	11 4	2 3	2 6	1 7	2 4	9 0

Table 4: Factors influencing General Medicine as A career option

Factors	Will Consider General Medicine as a Career Option 16		Significance (p Value)
	Agree	Disagree	
Comparable Salary to other Professions 17			
Agree	95	22	55.70 (<0.001)*
Disagree	25	62	
Presence of Scientific Prestige 18			
Agree	100	22	67.12 (<0.001)*
Disagree	20	62	
Comparable Fame in General Medicine 19			
Agree	71	56	1.18 (0.28)
Disagree	49	28	

Career Satisfaction 20			
Agree	77	66	4.89
Disagree	43	18	(0.027)**
Recognition in Society 21			
Agree	72	37	5.05
Disagree	48	47	(0.025)**
Lack of Info. As a career prospect. 22			
Agree	81	64	1.18
Disagree	39	20	(0.18)
Presence of Role models in Community Medicine 23			
Agree	82	45	4.58
Disagree	38	39	(0.032)**
Was the subject projected well by faculty and postgraduate students? 26			
Agree	78	51	0.39
Disagree	42	33	(0.53)
Dissatisfaction among current Doctors in Community Medicine 27			
Agree	62	52	2.1
Disagree	58	32	(0.15)

*Significant, **Significant at a level of < 0.05

Results

Table 1 shows a total of 204 students participated in the study, of which 82 (40.2%) were males and 120 (58.82%) were females. The distribution of students across the two academic years was almost equal. Religion and Caste were not considered.

Table 2 show that a total of 130 (63.73%) students claimed to have understood the concept of General Medicine and 148 (72.55%) felt that they had realized the relevance of General Medicine to the health issue, and 135 (66.18%) students said that the knowledge they had gained in the Dept. of General Medicine would be useful for their careers as doctors.

Even though 137(67.16 %) students did attend General Medicine as often as other lectures, a large number of students said that they did not have complete notes in the subject (107 i.e. 52.45 %), and that they lectures were too few in number (106 i.e. 51.96 %). Students who felt that the lectures weren't stimulating enough were 110 (53.92 %) in number.

Table 3 shows that out of 204 students, 120 (58.82%) students said that they would opt for General Medicine as a career and 117(57.35%) students felt that General Medicine would provide a salary comparable to other disciplines. A large number of students felt that they would be satisfied by a career in General Medicine (143 students i.e. 70.1 %) and that they had been provided with enough information regarding General Medicine as a future career prospect (145 students i.e. 71.08%). Most students had seen someone do well in the field of General medicine (139 students i.e. 68.14%) and were impressed by someone in the field of General Medicine (127 students i.e. 62.25%)

Students would opt for General Medicine as a career option due to getting a good salary, good prestige, career satisfaction and recognition in society, which can be seen when comparing the factors and achieving significant results in the above four mentioned criteria. (Table 4)

Discussion

A relatively high percentage of students claimed to understand the concept of general medicine, claimed to have gleaned the relevance of the subject in the field of medicine. Most of the students did say that they usually attended the General Medicine as much as those of other disciplines. However there was a large section of the students who definitely felt that most of the classes tended to be monotonous and not very stimulating in a general sense.

A majority of the students said that they would opt for General medicine as a career option. Most of the studies done in India and abroad were consistent with this fact. This could be seen consistently in the studies done by Kumar et al [13], Anand et al [6], Subba et al [14], and Abdul Ghani et al [15]. However in the study done by Khamees et al [16] the larger population gravitated towards the Surgical branches rather than General Medicine., but many of the students still opted for General Medicine out of the total number. It is interesting to note that in all the above studies, when given a choice many students did opt for a Surgical Branch, however since this choice wasn't given in the present study and focus was only given to general medicine, it is difficult to surmise whether this will be reflected in the present scenario.

The study seems to point out that the roles that preceptors and other faculty members, including the

post graduate students may actually influence the students in selecting the subject as a career choice. This can be clearly seen when a significant result was obtained when comparing the students who may select the subject as a career option as well as having influencing role models. This is quite consistent with studies done on students by Stagg et al [17] and Kumar et al. [13] However the study done by Gazewood et al [18] suggests that the role of the preceptor (role models), has no influence on the selection of General Medicine as a Career option.

Another factor which seems to influence the choice of the students is monetary gains. In the present study there is a significant relationship between the expected salary and the choice of general medicine as a career option. This is quite consistent in other studies done by Comparable salary such as the studies done by Subba et al [14], Khamees et al [16]

Presence of Scientific Prestige seems to highly influence the choice of General Medicine as a career choice. Similar results have been obtained by the study done by Kumar et al. [13]

The study done by Anand et al [6] and Subba et al [14] shows that career choice was highly influenced by personal as well as professional growth and satisfaction. Similarly in the present study significant comparisons can be seen between selecting General Medicine as a Career and satisfaction as well as recognition in the society.

Conclusions

As per the results obtained in our study, it seems that students seem to understand the subject well and they do not have an issue with the topics, or projection of the subject. The students also seem to attend the lectures as often as other disciplines in spite of some students having a less favorable attitude towards the length of the lectures and stimulation gained.

However despite the above facts when it comes to choosing the subject as a career choice the students seem to be reluctant to do so for various reasons such as the pay scale, prestige, fame and status in society. Most participants also felt that the satisfaction gained after choosing General Medicine might not be enough.

Limitations

This study has been conducted in a single institute and it may not reflect the opinions of the general population, despite the fact that most of the results match the studies done earlier.

Recommendations

Similar such studies need to be conducted using a larger sample size, and across multiple phases of study to accurately determine the impact of General medicine as a subject and a career option.

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