

MEDLINE Abstract

Factors influencing medical students' choice of specialty.

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BACKGROUND/PURPOSE: Medical school graduates are the source of a country's physicians. Determining how the graduates of these schools select their areas of specialization is the key to achieving a balanced distribution of doctors among all specialties. The purposes of this study were to determine the factors that influence medical students' choice of medical specialty, and to derive the relative weight of each factor. **METHODS:** We constructed a two-tiered analytic hierarchy process (AHP) model which was represented in a questionnaire sent to 500 senior medical students to survey their opinions. The relative weight of each factor in the model was calculated. Analysis of variance and t test were applied to test for any significant differences in opinion among the students. **RESULTS:** On the first tier of the AHP model, the aspect of "personal preferences and work achievement" had the highest weight of 0.460, followed by "specialty characteristics" with 0.291, and then the "specialty training process" with 0.249. Of the 14 criteria on the second tier, "personal intelligence/ability preference" had the highest weight of 0.197, followed by "career opportunities" with 0.107 and "lifestyle after completion of training" with 0.094. **CONCLUSION:** This study found that personal intelligence/ability preference and career opportunities were more important factors to the current generation of students in choosing a specialty. Knowledge of these students' attitudes could form the basis for the development of strategies to enhance the attractiveness of specialties facing the problem of a shortage of manpower.

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