Factors associated with intention to leave medical school among Norwegian medical students

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by

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Background

• Medical school is hard work, but also very interesting.
• Most research has focused on those who dropout.
Aims

We lack knowledge on the prevalence of intention to leave (ITL) medical school and associated factors.

➢ Study the prevalence of ITL
➢ Associated factors with ITL
➢ Self-reported reasons for ITL
Method

Participants: Medical students (N= 1634) in Trondheim and Bergen

Web survey

Study period: January to March, 2015

Total response rate: 63.9 % (1044/1634)

Trondheim: 73.4 % (529/708)
Bergen: 56.5 % (524/926)
Method

TRADITIONAL

INTEGRATED

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Method

The web survey included:

- Demographic data
- Perviced medical school stress (study stress)
  - Medical school is cold and threatening (PMSS climate)
  - Worries about work and competence (PMSS competence)
  - Worries about finance and accommodation (PMSS resources)
- Social support
- Self-reported reasons for ITL
Results I

28.4 % (n= 297) had considered leaving
- 27.9 % (n= 145) integrated
- 29.1 % (n= 152) traditional

No gender differences

Intention to leave medical school in percent after faculty and study years - STUDMED 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study years</th>
<th>Intention to leave (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st and 2nd</td>
<td>26% Integrated 21% Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd and 4th</td>
<td>29% Integrated 25% Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th and 6th</td>
<td>28% Integrated 43% Traditional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results II

Logistic regression model showed that ITL was associated with:

- Young age (<21 yrs) at study start (OR= 1.5, p= .020)
- Last two study years (OR= 1.9, p= .001)
- PMSS Climate (OR= 2.4, p< .001)
- PMSS Competence (OR= 2.4, p< .001)
- PMSS Resources (OR= 0.9, p= .034)
- Support from peers (OR= 0.8, p= .002)
- Having a partner (OR= 1.5, p= .026)
## Results III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for intention to leave medical education</th>
<th>Total (n= 297 )</th>
<th>Trad* (n= 152)</th>
<th>Int** (n= 145)</th>
<th>Trad vs. Int</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studying medicine is straining my mental health</td>
<td>137 46.1%</td>
<td>74 48.7%</td>
<td>63 43.4%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.78-1.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workload is too heavy</td>
<td>112 37.7%</td>
<td>51 33.6%</td>
<td>61 42.1%</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.43-1.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical school was not what I had expected</td>
<td>99 33.3%</td>
<td>66 43.4%</td>
<td>33 22.8%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>1.57-4.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes too much time</td>
<td>82 27.6%</td>
<td>39 25.7%</td>
<td>43 29.7%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.49-1.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interests</td>
<td>76 25.6%</td>
<td>38 25.0%</td>
<td>38 26.2%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.56-1.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial concerns</td>
<td>21 7.1%</td>
<td>10 6.6%</td>
<td>11 7.6%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.35-2.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues</td>
<td>19 6.4%</td>
<td>17 11.2%</td>
<td>2 1.4%</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>2.04-39.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have failed on more than one exam</td>
<td>16 5.4%</td>
<td>4 2.6%</td>
<td>12 8.3%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.09-0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Traditional  
** Integrated  
OR= Odds Ratio  
CI= Confidence Interval
"A course model that is too passive, not very engaging. Want more assignments with feedback"

"Uncertain work conditions"

"Don’t fit in in the social part. The mental pressure has adverse effects on my everyday living – I feel guilty for everything I do which is not reading”

"Self-confidence. Feel that some times I don’t perform well enough and begin to doubt if I am really suited to be a physician"
Discussion

• 1/3 reported ITL in both faculties.

• Students in the traditional faculty were more likely to report ITL in the last two study years.

• 1/2 reported that «medical school is straining my mental health» as a reason for ITL.

• Associated factors with ITL were:
  – Age at study start and study year
  – PMSS
  – Social support
Conclusion

“The prevalence of students considering dropping out of medical school is relatively high and most associated with study stress and lack of social support from peers.

Accordingly, it is important to pay attention to the specific and common correlates of intention to leave at each faculty to further develop the medical curriculums and the social context of medical studies.”