

AB070. The future of general surgery in Ireland: factors influencing career decisions of medical students

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Background: The global decline in popularity of general surgery as a career option has been well described. The aim of this study was to elucidate the reasons for this among medical students in Ireland.

Methods: A questionnaire was distributed to clinical year medical students in Ireland using an online survey via SurveyMonkeyTM. Domains assessed included demographics, career plan and associated rationale. Anonymised responses were collated and evaluated.

Results: There were 307 responses. Females accounted for 66% (202). Mean age was 24y (SD =2.89). A total of

112 (36%) contemplated becoming general surgeons at some point during medical school; 195 never considered surgery. The 41/307 (13%) are currently planning to apply for a surgical scheme. Of the 87 who reconsidered their career choice, 41 (47%) attributed the decision to work/life balance, 30 (35%) to impact on personal relationships and 9 (11%) blamed uncertainty of rotations and the unclear career projection. Seven had other reasons. Students interested in general surgery were asked to quantify their knowledge of the application process for surgery—17 (15%) reported good, 39 (34%) fair and 56 (50%) reported poor insight.

Conclusions: A small proportion of Irish medical students plan to pursue a career in general surgery. This is concerning in view of well described attrition rates through intern and house officer years. Although lifestyle factors are significant in many students' decision, clarity regarding the surgical training pathway was also reported. Undergraduate education by training bodies regarding expected career trajectory, quality of life and practicalities of a career in general surgery may increase applications for surgical training schemes.

Keywords: General surgery; medical students; career

doi: 10.21037/map.2020.AB070

Cite this abstract as: Samy A, Corless K, Kamil A, Bassily K, Shafik L, O'Brien K, Ali AB, Hogan A. The future of general surgery in Ireland: factors influencing career decisions of medical students. *Mesentery Peritoneum* 2020;4:AB070.