

# Medical Students' Career Aspirations

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## Background

Countries with a strong primary care system have better health outcomes, fewer preventable deaths and lower costs<sup>1</sup>

Because of the revised structure of specialist training, a doctor will need to be confident in his or her early career choice.<sup>2</sup>

It is currently unclear what motives sustain an interest in general practice and how governmental reforms have influenced medical students career aspirations.

## Aim

To investigate the factors influencing medical students career choices, with particular focus on general practice.

## Method

The study used qualitative research methodology involving semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

19 final year medical students were recruited from Warwick Medical Schools 2005 cohort for 3 focus-groups. Discussions were recorded and analysed using thematic analysis.

22 members of clinical teaching staff were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Selection aimed to produce a representative cross section of specialities. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, coding used framework analysis.

## Results

### Specialty stereotype

*"The public think general practitioners are not as trained as hospital doctors" (Faculty)*

*"Some GPs think they're the best because they are sifting through everybody (Student)*

### Role models

*"Now the curriculum is primary care based, there are more role models, and so more people will do general practice" (Faculty)*

*"Lack of role models steered me away from hospital doctors" (Faculty)*

### Quality of life

*"Flexibility and time management will stimulate student to go into general practice" (Faculty)*

*"I want to have a life outside of medicine...." (Student)*



## Conclusion

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors govern medical students' career choices. Intrinsic themes highlighted in our interviews included self perception and innate skill. Extrinsic influence results from exposure to the specialty, experience of the exposure and positive role modelling. Such influences help modify common stereotypes.

Governmental policy appears to have a large impact on themes such as lifestyle and career progression. This results in dynamic work force beliefs.