

Perceptions of medical students about family medicine in Ghana

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BACKGROUND

➤ Declining interest in Family Medicine by medical graduates.

- A yearly review by AAFP of entries of US medical school graduates into family medicine residency programmes.
 - 10.3 % (2002)
 - 9.3% (2003)
 - 9.2% (2004)
 - 8.4% (2005).

BACKGROUND

Comparison of 4 cohorts of med. graduates in GP careers in Australia.

Year of grad.	%Graduates in GP after 8yrs.
1980	50
1985	50
1990	38
1995	33

Joyce CM, McNeil JJ. *Med J Aust.* 2006; 17;185(2):102-4.)

BACKGROUND

- The UK Medical Careers Research Group (UKMCRG);
 - GP in the UK experiencing difficulty with medical staff recruitment and retention.
 - Reduced numbers choosing careers in GP.

Evans J, Lambert T, Goldacre M.

Occas Pap R Coll Gen Pract. 2002 Feb;(83):iii-vi, 1-33.

BACKGROUND

- Reasons for the decline in Family Medicine careers.
 - Mastering too broad a content area.
 - Insufficient prestige.
 - Low intellectual content.
 - Poor remuneration and status.
 - Negative comments by faculty and residents of other specialties.

Tolhurst H, Stewart M Aust Fam Physician. 2005 Mar;34(3):204-6.

Schafer S, Shore W, French L, Tovar J, Hughes S, Hearst N.

Fam Med. 2000 May;32(5):320-5.

BACKGROUND

- Positive Factors for Family Medicine
 - Diversity of practice.
 - Continuity and community context.
 - Flexible working conditions.
 - Offered a superior quality of life.

Tolhurst H, Stewart M *Aust Fam Physician*. 2005 Mar;34(3):204-6.
Jones L, Fisher T. *Br J Gen Pract*. 2006 Feb;56(523):134-6.

BACKGROUND

- Suggested measures to arrest decline
 - Medical Schools to redouble efforts to produce primary care physicians.
 - Attractive training models eg. Integrative FamMed progs.
 - Increased govt. support in funding research and career pathway.
 - *Early exposure of medical students to Family Medicine curriculum and training.*

Schwartz MD, Basco WT Jr, Grey MR, Elmore JG, Rubenstein A.
Ann Intern Med. 2005 Apr 19;142(8):715-24.

Maizes V, Silverman H, Lebensohn P et al. Acad Med. 2006 Jun;81(6):583-9.

BACKGROUND

➤ The African Situation

- Studies mainly from South Africa and Nigeria.
- They portray a growing enthusiasm and opportunity for progress of the specialty.
- Challenges include:
 - definition of exact role, appropriate positioning of the specialty, recognition & support by govt., acceptability by medical schools, requirements for training & research etc.

Cobban K. *J.Coll. Gen. Practit.* 1963, 6, 279.

Mash B, de Villiers M. *Med Educ.* 1999 Oct;33(10):725-9.

de Villiers PJ, de Villiers MR. *Med Educ.* 1999 Oct;33(10):716-21.

Omotara BA, Asuzu MC, Padonu MK. *East Afr Med J.* 1991 Jul;68(7):547-54.

BACKGROUND

➤ Family Medicine in Ghana

- Relatively young having begun in the late 1990's.
- Mixture of growing enthusiasm and some skepticism among proponents and other stakeholders respectively.
- No studies to assess the perceptions of stakeholders including medical students and graduates about family medicine.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Residency training in family medicine on-going in Ghana for 9 years.
- Low impact due to few numbers being trained.
- Knowledge about the discipline among doctors & other stakeholders is low or superficial.
- Medical students and graduates are the eventual recruits into the family medicine residency programme;
- It is important to determine their views about the discipline in order to address any prevailing misconceptions.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

➤ Main objective:

To determine the perceptions of medical students about family medicine with regard to knowledge and relevance of the discipline as well as their specialty preferences.

➤ Specific objectives:

- To assess the extent of awareness of family medicine among medical students.
- To determine their views on the relevance of family medicine in health delivery.
- To determine their specialty preferences with regard to family medicine.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

- The University of Ghana Medical School is in the process of establishing a FM/PHC department.
- The outcome of this study will form part of the stakeholder surveys to inform implementers of the programme on the course of action.
- Implications for recruitment into residency.

LIMITATION

- Entire no. of students could not be interviewed as envisaged due to attrition in attendance to lectures.

METHODOLOGY

- **Research design** - descriptive qualitative study.
- **Study population & sampling** – All first year clinical students (class of 2010) of the University of Ghana Medical School,
 - who were in class before the first lecture; &
 - consented to participate.

(First batch to be formally introduced to the family medicine curriculum.)

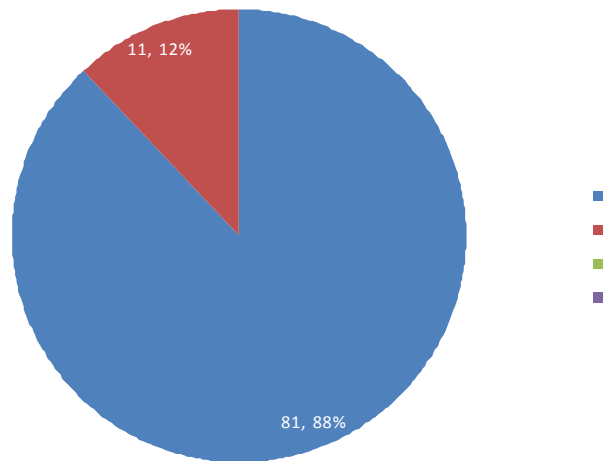
METHODOLOGY

- **Instrument** – Questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-end questions.
 - Pre-tested among final year medical students to ensure validity and reliability.
- **Data collection** - Serially numbered questionnaires were distributed to 92 (out of expected 182) students present in class just before the commencement of block lectures in family medicine on 21st July 2008. All questionnaires were retrieved before the lectures began.
- **Data analysis** – MS Access & Spss v16.

RESULTS

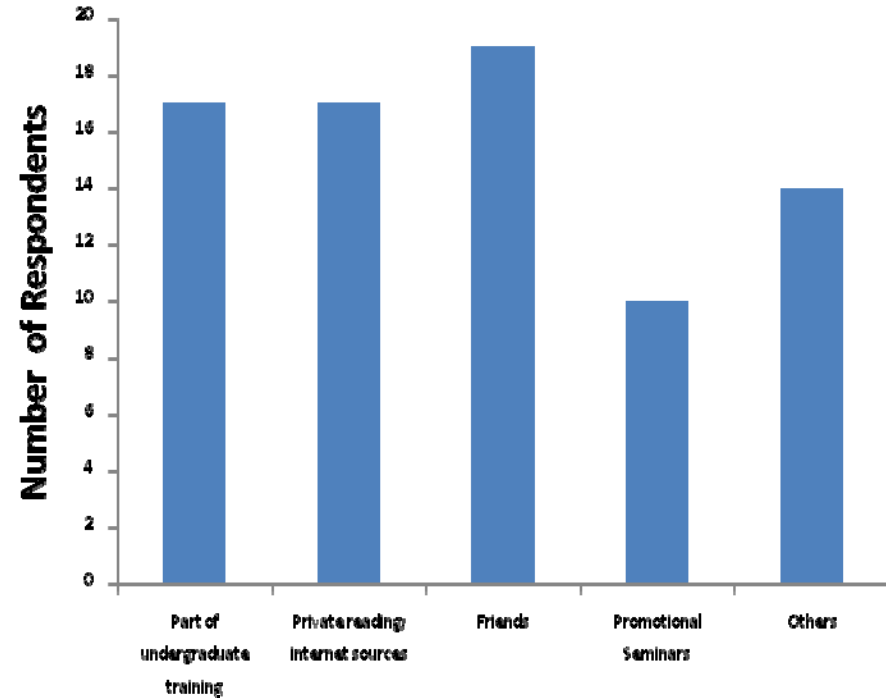
1. Awareness of Family Medicine

Level of Awareness



Sources of Awareness

No. of Respondents (n=77)



Awareness of Family Medicine

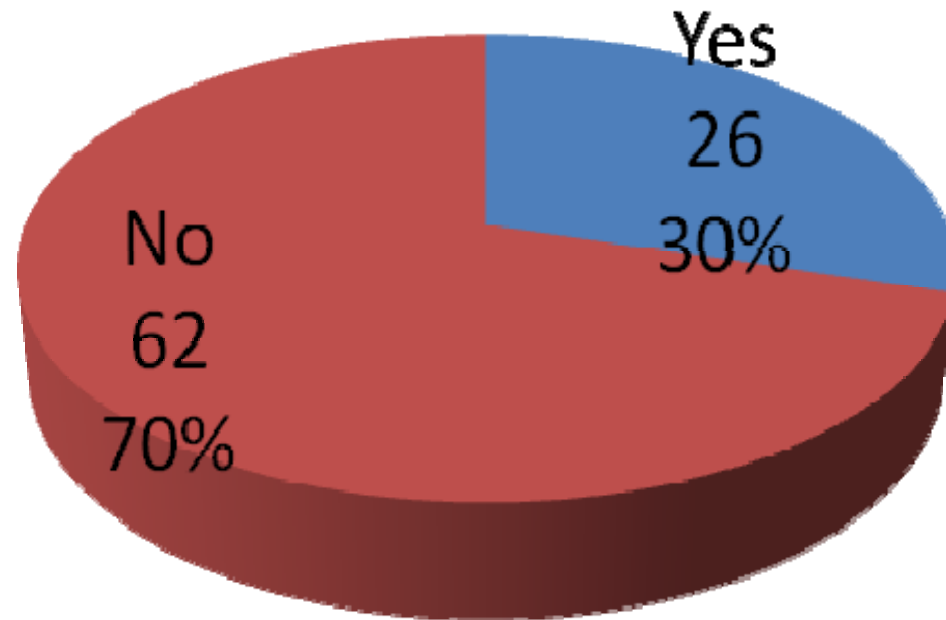
Table 1: Awareness of Family Medicine as a Medical Specialty

Type of Response	No. of Respondents (n=92)	Percentage %
Yes	65	70.7
No	4	4.3
Don't Know	23	25.0
Total	92	100.0

Awareness of Family Medicine

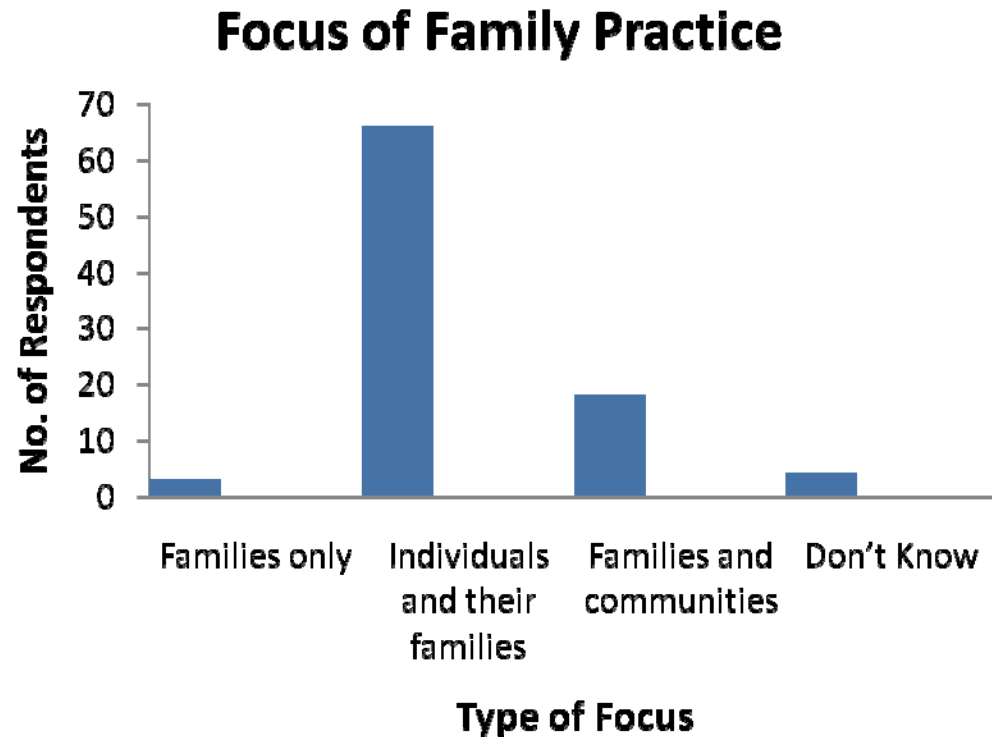
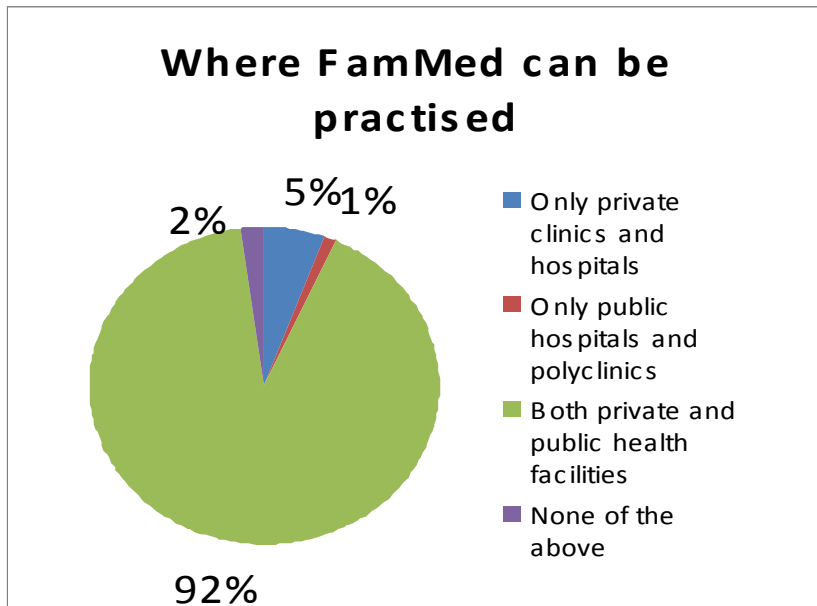
(n=88)

Awareness of Family Medicine Postgraduate Training in Ghana



RESULTS

2. Practice & Relevance of Family Medicine



(n=91)

Practice & Relevance of Family Medicine

Table 2: Family Physicians provide total healthcare for 70-80% of clients.

Level of Agreement	No. of Respondents (n=90)	Percentage %
Agree	49	54.4
Disagree	3	3.3
Not Sure	38	42.2
Total	90	99.9

Practice & Relevance of Family Medicine

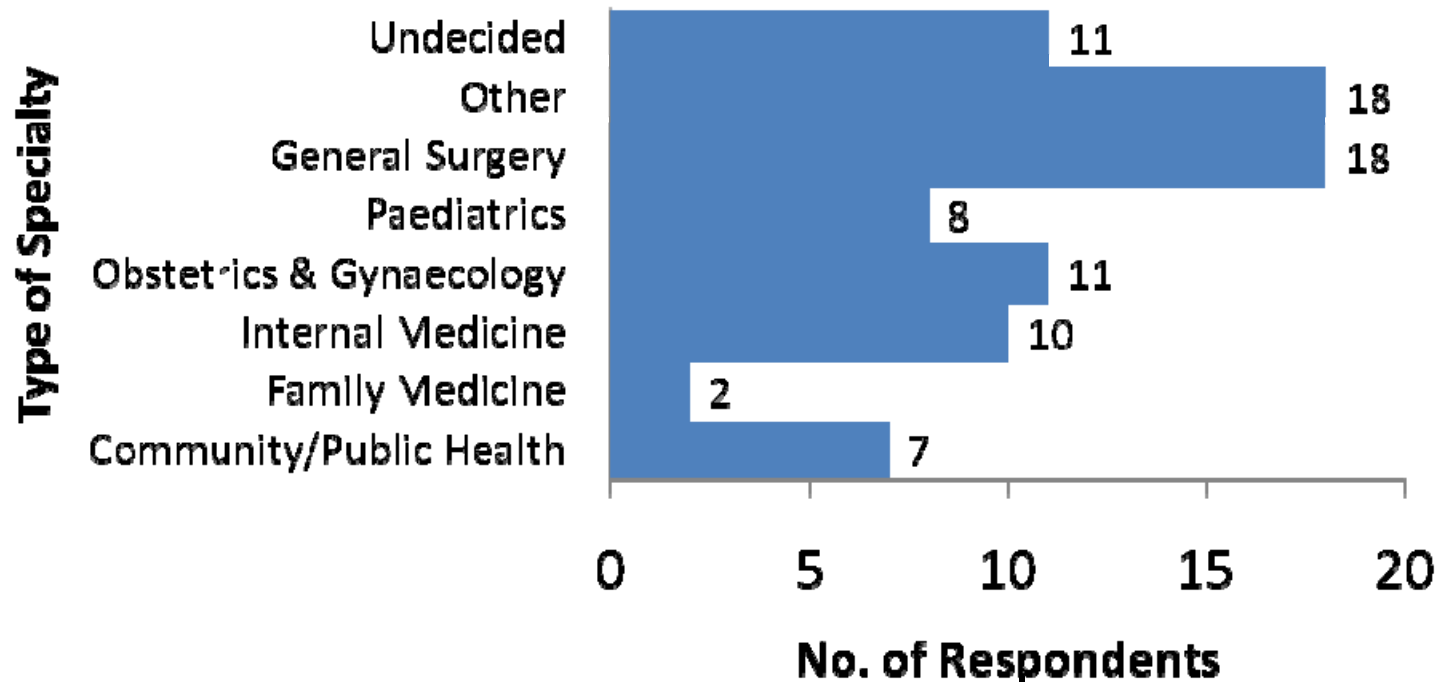
Table 3: Availability of Family Physicians will reduce cost of care and improve overall health delivery

Level of Agreement	No. of Respondents (n=89)	Percentage %
Agree	71	79.8
Disagree	3	3.4
Not sure	15	16.8
Total	89	100.0

RESULTS

3. Specialty Preference for Training (n=85)

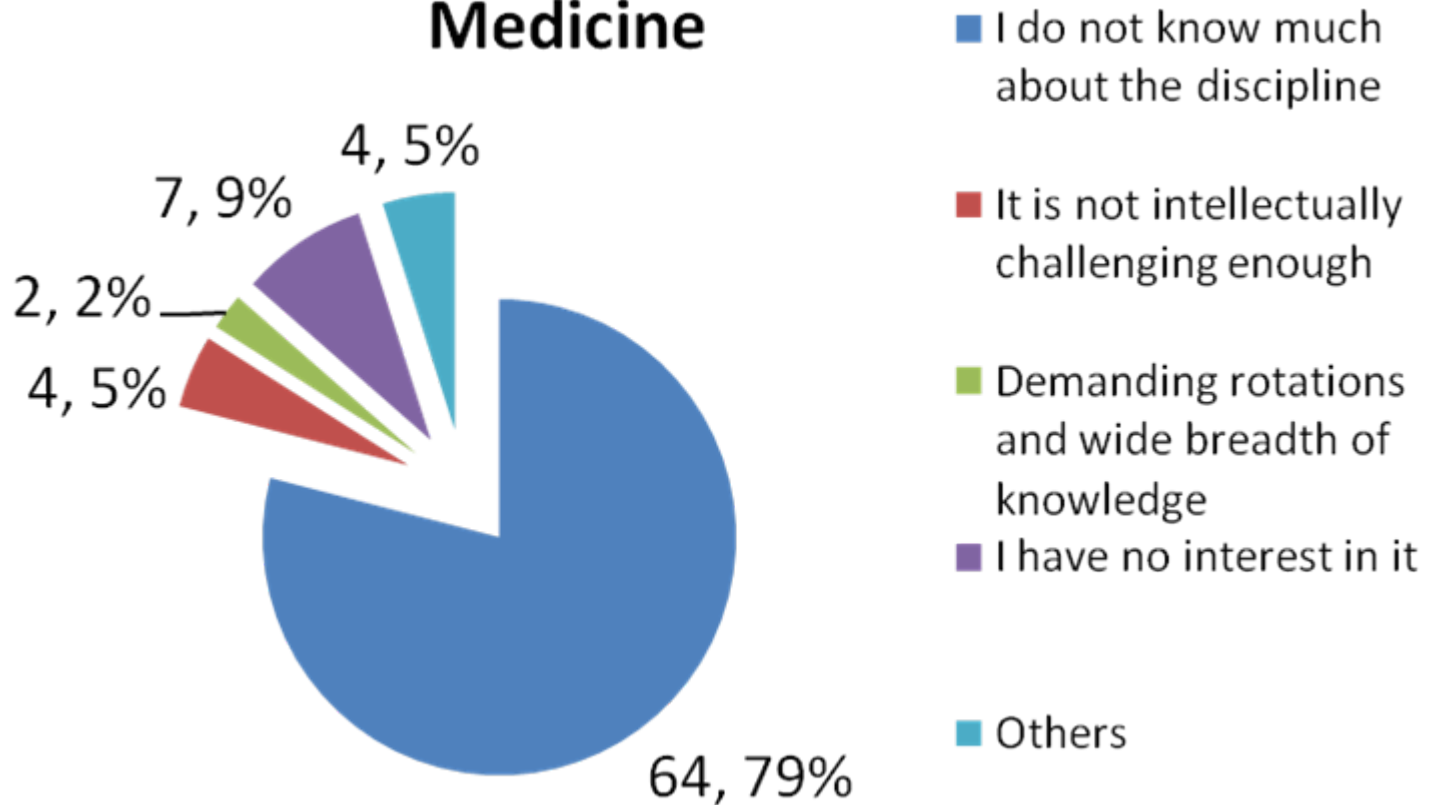
Specialty Preference for Postgraduate Training



Specialty Preference for Training

Reasons for not Choosing Family

Medicine



n=85

RESULTS

(Summary)

- Ninety-two students (92) were interviewed (i.e. 50.5% of class population).
- Awareness of family medicine was high among respondents 88%(81/92). 70.7%(65/92) did not know it was a medical specialty and 70.0%(62/88) were not aware of an existing residency programme.
- 54.4%(49/90) of respondents agreed that a family physician was capable of managing completely 70-80% of conditions presenting at the primary care level while 45.5%(41/90) either disagreed or were not sure of his capability.
- Only 2.4%(2/85) preferred family medicine as a specialty of choice. The major reason for not choosing the discipline was the lack of knowledge about it 79.0%(64/85).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

- Awareness about family medicine was high but it lacked depth.
- Half of the students had confidence in the capabilities of the family physician; however a very low specialty preference for family medicine was recorded primarily due to lack of understanding of the discipline.
- These findings present challenges to the trainers to teach and practice family medicine to attract undergraduates into residency programmes in Ghana.
- Further studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- PRIMAFAMED – Prof. Jan de Maeseneer & Dr. Maaïke Flinkenflogel – *(my gracious benefactors)*
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