



ACADEMIC MOTIVATION IN GPs ENROLLED IN THE GENERAL/FAMILY MEDICINE POST-GRADUATE PROGRAM

R. Asenova^{1*}, G. Foreva¹, G. Petrova²

¹Department of General Practice, Public Health Faculty, Medical University, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

²Department of Medical Pedagogy, Public Health Faculty, Medical University, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

Background: Family Medicine became an academic medical discipline and an independent specialty in Bulgaria in 1998. During the last decade physicians working in primary health care have been in need of compulsory certification. Nowadays GPs are under the pressure of daily practice, on-going socio-political reforms in the health care system and the popular opinion is that they did not have good grounds for specialization.

Aim: The study was conducted in order to determine the attitude to learning and training in General/Family Practice of the GPs groups who specialize in the Department of General Practice at the Medical University Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Academic motivation as a determinative aspect of the educational process is assessed.

Material and method: 66 (sixty six) GPs filled in the scale for academic motivation (Velichkov, 2005).

Results: The average age of the investigated group was $41,12 \pm 6,67$ years. Women prevail in $55,70 \pm 5,59\%$. Two thirds of the GPs had more than ten years of professional experience. According to the responses, the physicians were divided into three subgroups with low ($10,61 \pm 3,79\%$), medium ($46,97 \pm 6,14\%$) and high ($42,42 \pm 6,08\%$) degree of motivation; there was no one in the sub-group with the lack of academic motivation. Annoyance with the great number of theoretical details ($31,82 \pm 5,73\%$ of the GPs) was the most frequent reason for negative attitude. The leading positive attitude towards the academic motivation in $62,13 \pm 5,97\%$ of residents was related to gaining solid knowledge.

Conclusion: Despite the difficult social conditions, GPs residents were mostly positive and motivated regarding their specialization.

Key words: motivation, general practitioners

BACKGROUND

Family Medicine became an academic medical discipline and an independent specialty in Bulgaria in 1998. During the last decade physicians working in primary health care have been in need of compulsory certification. Nowadays GPs are under the pressure of daily practice, on-going socio-political reforms in the health care system and the popular opinion is that they did not have good grounds for specialization.

AIM

The study was conducted in order to determine the attitude to learning and training in

General/Family Practice of the GPs groups who specialize in the Department of General Practice at the Medical University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Academic motivation as a determinative aspect of the educational process is assessed.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A group of 66 (sixty-six) post-graduate students who have completed the course in General Medicine were surveyed regarding their motivation during their training.

Questionnaire survey including the scale of Questionnaire To Assess The Level of Academic Motivation (Velichkov, 2005) was used. The questionnaire consists of 11 (eleven) items, 7 (seven) of which correspond to high academic motivation and 4 (four) contain the opposite attitude. Each item allows a response according to a four-point Likert scale. The

*Correspondence to: R. Asenova, Plovdiv 4000, 15A Vasil Aprilov str, +359 32 602500, +359 32 633447, r_assenova@yahoo.com

score ranks motivation as strong, moderate, weak, and lack of academic motivation.

The data were processed using SPSS version 17.

RESULTS

The average age of the investigated group was $41,12 \pm 6,67$ years. Women prevail in $55,70 \pm 5.59\%$. Two thirds of the GPs had more than ten years of professional experience. 4 ($31.6 \pm 5.23\%$) had previous specialization - in Internal Medicine ($48.00 \pm 9.99\%$), Pediatrics ($40.00 \pm 9.80\%$) and others ($12 \pm 6.50\%$).

According to the responses the physicians were divided into three subgroups with low ($10,61 \pm 3.79\%$), medium ($46.97 \pm 6.14\%$) and high ($42,42 \pm 6.08\%$) degree of motivation; there was no one in the sub-group with the lack of academic motivation.

The responses with the highest points according to Likert scale resulting in high score, and in a strong academic motivation respectively, were analyzed.

The leading motive among the positive statements in $62,13 \pm 5.97\%$, is the expectation of obtaining permanent knowledge. The next one, according to the frequency of the chosen factors given by the active post-graduates, is related to demand of additional information: from literature ($47,01 \pm 6.14\%$), from electronic resources ($19,69 \pm 4.89\%$), or further from the teachers ($15.15 \pm 4.41\%$). Other behaviors, defining a strong academic motivation are taking notes regularly ($39,39 \pm 6.01\%$), and regular visits to all training events ($18,18 \pm 4.75\%$). Finally, as a reason the doctors have put the pursuit of higher grades in all studied subjects ($7,57 \pm 3.26\%$).

At the opposite pole, as a demotivator, the highest percentage ($31,82 \pm 5.73\%$), according to the GPs completed the questionnaire, referred to the statement: "There are too many theoretical details in the training."

DISCUSSION

The GP as the main contractor in primary health care, needs to be well prepared in order to provide quality health care services to the population. Specialization in General Medicine is regulated at national level - in the respective laws, regulations and program. (1-5) Training is provided in all the medical universities in the country, as well as in hospital and outpatient facilities accredited for training.

It's a specific national feature that a significant proportion of trainees actually retrain because of the structural reform of the health-care system. In the previous organization of health-care in the country, the institution of a general practitioner / family doctor did not exist, and the primary health care was provided by the so-called district doctor – specialist in internal medicine when providing services for adults and in pediatrics when providing childcare. This fact correlates with the high average age (over 40 years old) of the trainees. The gender distribution in the group also reflects the trend of feminisation of the medical profession, including general practice, despite the significant workload associated with the daily outpatient work, home visits and around the clock disposal of services.

Motivation is one of the most important psychological concepts in education directly related to academic performance, defined as a set of mental processes that define the behavior of man, direct him towards a goal and keep it unchanged for some time.

Motivation is determined by external factors related to the community and internal factors related to the personality. (6)

The changes in the health-care system are basically the social stimulus for doctors to specialize in General/Family Medicine. GPs responsibilities and the expectations by the society from them are great. Greater responsibilities are generally associated with greater motivation. (7)

Trainees, especially as in the case of physicians with prior experience and even with other specializations as well, have their own goals and it is necessary to achieve balance, even consensus between their goals and the objectives of the training program.

The grounds of the Questionnaire To Assess The Level of Academic Motivation (Velichkov, 2005) are set on statements that reflect active attitude towards the teaching process, self-discipline and a strive to complement and extend the knowledge obtained. (8)

Achieving further levels of professional competence appears to be a leading aspect in motivating trainees who aspire to lasting knowledge, actively seeking additional information from different sources.

The results concerning the regularity of visits to training events reflect the social situation. While absent from the clinic, the GPs are under pressure from the waiting patients, and the additional costs required hiring a replacement. Additionally, doctors' private time - their free time, family time, is reduced. It is known that the ability to maintain balance between personal and professional life is one of the major motivating factors. (9)

Among the surveyed trainees achieving high success is not listed among the leading factors of high academic motivation. In *Teaching Adults* Rogers discusses the problem of evaluation and points out the necessity of considering the relationship between the external evaluation of teachers and the importance that trainees give to it. (10) The results on this issue in the surveyed group show that trainees do not directly link assessment with obtaining knowledge and skills.

Because post-graduate students are primarily working physicians with experience and empirical knowledge in their work, it is not surprising that among the four negative responses related to academic motivation, the one that reflects very detailed introduction into theoretical details not directly relevant in practice is most often cited. The approach of GPs to learning is pragmatic; they appreciate the training that is practical and provides an opportunity if necessary to quickly obtain information about the specific problem of a patient. (11)

The Questionnaire To Assess The Level of Academic Motivation (Velichkov, 2005) used in the study reflects only certain factors. Motivation is a very complex construction, a characteristic feature of which is variability due to individual attitudes and as a response to external/social situations, as well. The study of motivation for learning among GPs, particularly in the process of reformation of a health-care system could contribute to improving the quality of both learning process, and health-care provided. Miller et al. offer to perform "motivational audit" to identify the individual factors and factors associated with

the environment, defining training behavior of GPs. (12)

CONCLUSION

GPs in Bulgaria work in a social environment, a factor of which is the negative external motivator for their training - legal obligations, necessity to avoid sanctions, and the lack of financial incentives, as well. High academic motivation, which the study group shows may be associated with the individual assessment of adequacy of training and satisfaction of inner needs.

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