Medical Student Perceptions of Intellectual Stimulation and Academia in Family Medicine

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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

- **Faculty:** Patrick Goeres

- **Relationships with financial sponsors:**
  - Grants/Research support: N/A
  - Speakers Bureau/Honoraria: N/A
  - Consulting Fees: N/A
  - Patents: N/A
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 Relationships with financial sponsors:
  - Grants/Research support: N/A
  - Speakers Bureau/Honoraria: N/A
  - Consulting Fees: N/A
  - Patents: N/A
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Background

• Primary care is a cornerstone of healthcare yet recruitment remains a challenge 1-5

• Systematic reviews identify factors which influence medical student career choice – mentorship, autonomy, remuneration, job opportunities and intellectual stimulation6-7

• Recent UK research suggesting FM not intellectually stimulating5,9
Background

• Evidence based medicine and research-informed clinical practice are growing needs
  • FM-specific research is a growing need

• A recent systematic review found that influences on what attracts medical students to academia has been minimally studied\textsuperscript{8}

• UK and Canada
  • Student perceptions largely unknown in Canada
Research Questions

• Do medical students view Family Medicine as intellectually stimulating?

• How do they view the role of academia in Family Medicine?

• Could academic pursuits enhance one’s career and fill the perceived need for intellectual stimulation in Family Medicine?
Methods

- Exploratory qualitative study with focus groups

University of Calgary:
- 3 year program
- Students have prior degree at entry, 1/3 at MSc / PhD level

University of Newcastle:
- 6 year program
- Direct entry from school
Methods

• Data collection: 8 focus group interviews
  • Calgary: 4 groups with 26 students
  • Newcastle: 4 groups with 18 students

• Data analysis: Thematic data analysis\textsuperscript{11,12}
• Research team: 6 members
• Ethics approval by CHREB through UCalgary & Newcastle
Results

1. Intellectual stimulation in Family Medicine
2. Academia in Family Medicine
3. Role models in UGME
Results

1. Intellectual stimulation in Family Medicine

I think it is probably the most intellectually stimulating of any of the disciplines that I can imagine because you get so much breadth and you really can take it down any rabbit hole that you want...If all I had to do was listen to hearts for the rest of my life I would die of boredom. (FG4, D)

...one of those few...specialties in medicine where there is actually a lot of lateral movement (FG1, E)

I have...always found family medicine...incredibly over stimulating because there are so many things that factor into a patient presentation (FG2, A)
2. Academia in Family Medicine

I have honestly never heard those three words pieced together in that way. (FG2, A)

All I’ve ever heard GP’s talk about is social research... (FG1, R1)

My reflex...would be from the teaching perspective (FG3, A)

I would just think it means being evidence based in your family practice (FG2, E)

I’d love to know what research you can do in Family Medicine (FG 4, E)

Having a balance of being a clinician but also a researcher...can be beneficial. (FG3, E)
Results

3. Role models in UGME

It’s easy to have a [specialist] mentor and be exposed to [research]. (FG1, C)

...increasing awareness of academic family medicine...could really help students (FG1, E)

...the GP should have been able to spot this... (FG2, R1)

To be honest...I don’t know any family medicine doctors who are also researchers (FG1, E)

You don’t hear about the times family doctors are heroes, you hear about the time that family doctors screw up. I think that creates a really bad perception in the class. (FG3, B)
Limitations

• Single site within each country
• Participants at an early stages of training
• Interviewees self-selected
Discussion and Conclusions

• Family Medicine is viewed as intellectually stimulating on its own merits.
  
  • In a clinical setting, undifferentiated patients are most likely to maximize learners’ interest and intellectual stimulation.

  • Clinical decision-making tools and evidence-based medicine are valued by learners and associated with increased intellectual stimulation.

  • Learners can be overwhelmed with complicated patients and can find these experiences off-putting.
Discussion and Conclusions

• Academia has value, but is not commonly associated with increased intellectual stimulation in Family Medicine.
  • Academia can complement clinical work for some, but those with positive experiences in academia are more likely to pursue future academia.

• Role models are influential in UGME
  • Lack of FM-academic exposure should be addressed
  • Medical schools should be willing to affirm positive role models and address negative attitudes.
References


