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5 YEAR SURVEY OF 12,400+ MEDICAL GRADUATES REVEALS DOCTORS UNCONCERNED WITH FINANCIAL BENEFITS, KEEN TO WORK OUTSIDE CAPITAL CITIES and INTERESTED IN RESEARCH

A comprehensive five year questionnaire of Australia's final year medical students reveals some surprising trends regarding their expectations, economic and career aspirations. The Medical Students Workforce Survey results have been released on the eve of the annual conference of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand to be held in Adelaide on 12/13 October.

Since 2012 the annual survey has been completed by more than 12,450 final year graduates of Australia's medical schools. The survey asked questions about demographics, birthplace, career goals, rural versus metropolitan origin and course satisfaction trends from 2012 to 2016.

Highlights of the study include:

- In 2016, 34.9 % of graduates indicated their first preference region for future practice was outside a capital city compared to 32.5% in 2012. In 2016, 16.6% nominated a major urban centre, 12% a regional city or large town and 6% a smaller town or community.
- The vast majority of graduates – up to 85.2% in 2016 – expressed an interest in teaching with just 3.1% indicating no interest in teaching
- Medical graduates are showing a steady increase in interest in research with 55.5% in 2012 to 62.2% in 2016
- Less graduates are under 25 years of age, with 40.9% in 2012 compared to 35.2% in 2016. This has been matched by a steady increase in graduates aged 30-34

Professor Richard Murray, President of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand said that he was pleased to see that over a third of graduates have expressed an interest in working outside a capital city.

“Rural, regional and remote communities in Australia are still too reliant for medical services on fly in, fly out and locum doctors, international medical graduates and travelling to cities for treatment. Medical Deans will continue to advocate for regionally based training pathways so that the aspirations of medical graduates translates into doctors in the specialties and locations most needed, improving health services across Australia.”

CEO, Carmel Tebbutt, added that the Medical Schools Outcomes Database, which has collected data from more than 30,000 final year medical graduates since 2008 “is an invaluable tool for policy makers, government and universities to use for work force planning purpose and in developing courses that produce the best, and brightest of our future doctors.”

In details the survey reveals that:

- Medical graduates continue to favor adult medicine/internal medicine/physician; general practice; surgery; paediatrics and child health/emergency and anaesthesia as the most popular areas of specialty
- Those areas that remain less popular as specialties include: addiction medicine; medical administration; occupational and environmental medicine; pain medicine; public health medicine; radiation oncology; rehabilitation medicine and sexual health medicine
- The number of students who remain satisfied with their medical program has remained constant over the five years – with around 75% satisfied or very satisfied compared to around 9% unsatisfied or very unsatisfied
- Nearly 60% of all medical students in 2016 had undertaken their medical school program as post graduates compared to 52 % in 2014.
- Most first degrees were in natural and physical sciences (46.4%) with 40% completing health related degrees, mainly medical studies, pharmacy and rehabilitation therapies
- There has been a significant increase in graduates who are not influenced by potential financial prospects as a reason for choosing their preferred area of medical practice – in 2014 22.5% of graduates indicated remuneration was “not at all” a consideration compared to 27.9% last year
- Most students also indicated that the financial costs of medical school education/debt did not influence their preferred choice of medicine upon graduating with more than half (54.6%) indicating in 2016 that this was “not at all” a consideration, a rise of nearly 8% compared to 2012

The Medical Schools Outcomes Database Linkage Project is funded by the Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Health. The National Data Report 2017 was prepared with the assistance of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

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