

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PRACTICE CHOICES OF AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS – A FEASIBILITY STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

Choice of specialty, practice location and hours of work are critical issues in the context of shortages in the medical workforce and emerging trends in medical careers. Trends such as doctors becoming more focused on lifestyle, wellbeing and family and choosing to work less hours are likely to contribute further to the medical workforce shortage and mal distribution in Australia and thus impact on the access to appropriate medical services for many communities. Understanding how, where and what our future doctors wish to practise has become increasingly important. This cross-sectional pilot study explored the role of personality, values, wellbeing and social cognitive variables in explaining the practice choices of medical students. The study aimed to develop and test a theoretical model, new and existing research instruments, and assess the feasibility of recruitment for a planned national longitudinal cohort study. Two-hundred and thirty-one first and final year medical students from six Australian universities participated in a Web-based survey. First year students were recruited via a face-to-face meeting and final year students recruited via email. Logistic regression analyses showed that values, professional outcome expectations and barriers were associated with choice of specialty; age, values and a rural background was associated with choice of practice location; and gender and values were associated with preferred hours of work. This study extends knowledge of the determinants of practice choices and has provided a solid foundation for the researchers' current national cohort study that is tracking medical students' that is tracking career choices over time.