

VDGM: VASCO DA GAMA MOVEMENT - Vasco da Gama Education and Training Theme Group undertake a survey of GP trainees and newly qualified GPs across Europe

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NEWS

VDGM: VASCO DA GAMA MOVEMENT

Vasco da Gama Education and Training Theme Group undertake a survey of GP trainees and newly qualified GPs across Europe

Background

Across Europe there is great diversity in primary health care systems, and similarly in GP vocational training (VT). Knowing more about the motivation for GP career choice, job satisfaction and satisfaction with their training schemes of European General Practice (GP) trainees and young GPs (within five years of certification) may inform activities for improvement. In 2005, the Wonca Europe published an updated definition of GP/FM. Coverage of this within European VT schemes has not been measured, nor has trainee workload and satisfaction been compared. The Vasco da Gama movement (VdGM) is the Wonca Europe working group for Young and Future GPs launched in 2005. The Education theme group (ETG) is one of five groups. Members have developed the satisfaction questionnaire (MSQ) since 2004, with the aim of exploring differences in motivation, workload and satisfaction across the very different VT schemes of Europe.

Questionnaire design, translation and recruitment

A first draft of the MSQ was developed by VdGM in English in 2006 and modified after discussion and feedback from members of EURACT and EGPRN. A panel-test using structured feedback forms was performed in 2008 by 30 trainees and young GPs from five European countries for further refinements. The final questionnaire contained three parts, (1) with questions about participants' characteristics, about satisfaction with training, structure and content of VT scheme and reasons for choosing GP/FM as a specialty, and about the coverage of the six core competencies of the EURACT educational agenda within the VT scheme.

A feasibility pilot in 2008 used 306 participants (204 GP trainees) from 14 countries. Country leads

from VdGM were recruited to adopt the survey in 2008–2009 and translated the questionnaire using an adaptation of a guideline. Minimum standard was translation by two separate people or groups, comparison of the two translated versions and production of a consensus final version. Back-translation was not mandatory for reasons of feasibility. The target population was GP trainees and GPs within the first five years of qualification (First5 GPs) inside participating European countries. Recruitment was carried out between October 2008 and July 2010. To recruit a sample of the target population most countries used a multifaceted recruitment strategy (using some or all of the following; internet pages, e-mails, articles in relevant newsletters and journals, personal contacts, conferences and GP trainee networks). Recruitment was adapted to suit national circumstances (1). In some countries (e.g. UK) an e-mail list of all GP trainees and First5 GPs was available; in this case all individuals from the target population were contacted and response rates calculated.

Conduct of the survey in the participating countries (2009 to 2010) resulted in 3722 participants (2533 GP trainees; 1189 First 5 GPs) from seven European countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, UK, Italy, Norway, Portugal). The sample was 63% female with an average age of 33 years. Preliminary results were presented at Wonca Europe conference 2010 in Malaga. Further analyses are underway to explore differences between subgroups (GP trainees and First5 GPs), countries and gender, and were reported on the Wonca Europe conference 2011.

Implications

As far as we are aware this is the first cross-national survey of trainees and newly qualified GPs examining motivation for career choice and career satisfaction. The main limitation of this project was the difficulty

of knowing whether the 3722 doctors who responded to the questionnaire are representative. The successful recruitment in countries with a central database of trainees (such as the UK) demonstrates the advantages this brings for researchers. However, in most countries a pragmatic approach was necessary. Nevertheless, results may provide important information to inform further studies in workforce planning and further development of postgraduate training within participating countries and cross-nationally. This is also the first example of the use of the VdGM network for cross-national research collaboration which it is hoped will encourage other academically minded young GPs across Europe to link up via the VdGM network.

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