

Factors influencing students' decision in choosing obstetrics and gynecology as a career in a university hospital in Central Saudi Arabia

To the Editor

I have 2 comments on the interesting study by Abu-Rafea et al¹ on the factors influencing students' decision in choosing Obstetrics and Gynecology (Obs & Gyne) as a career in a university hospital in Central Saudi Arabia.

First, the low percentage of medical students (9.7%) interested in Obs & Gyne addressed by Abu-Rafea et al¹ really yields deep concern, as that will adversely affect the foreseeable medical workforce, and create gaps in the Obs & Gyne healthcare services to women. A similar concern, but to a lesser extent exists in Iraq where 20.6% of medical students showed a career in Obs & Gyne (1.5% male, 19.1% female, $p < 0.001$).² Abu-Rafea et al¹ stated that the rotation of students through Obs & Gyne was the most influential factor attracting 81.3% of the students who chose to take this course, and that faculty interaction was a major reason for attracting students accounting for 71.9%. In contrast, matching personal interest (33.3%), and anticipated higher income (29%) were ranked as the most influencing factors contributed to the choice of a specialty among Iraqi medical students.² Interestingly, lifestyle and financial income have become more important to medical students in their career choice.^{3,4}

Second, a part from reinforcing dependent factors closely correlated with the career in Obs & Gyne among Saudi medical students,¹ considering students' personality profiles is of utmost importance. This is because personality or psychological features of the undergraduate medical students are substantially associated with their career choice. Students who chose Obs & Gyne were found to be anxiety-prone (neuroticism), uncomfortable around others (social anxiety), very concerned regarding appearances, and making a good impression (public self-conscious), and low in aggression, high in emotional vulnerability

(masculinity-femininity). They see themselves as warm and helpful people, but at a deeper motivational level, they manifest a preference for experiences that make them feel potent and influential (high power motive). Despite this need to feel strong and powerful, they tend to doubt that personal outcomes, which are so easily influenced by their actions (external locus of control).⁵ Also, they were noticed to like contact with (mostly healthy) patients, and express strong beliefs on reproductive issues.⁶ The Obs & Gyne clerkships must, therefore, integrate personality profiles of the undergraduate medical students in formulating plans to enhance student's interest in Obs & Gyne.

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Reply from the Author

No reply was received from the Author.

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