Impact of community size on primary care career choice

By Edward Simanton and Brooke Jensen
Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare
Introduction:

- Primary care physicians are the base upon which healthcare systems are built.
- Not enough students going into primary care
- There is some evidence that students trained in rural areas
- Had rural trainees already chosen primary care before choosing rural training?
Purpose of the Study:

- Examine the effect (of rural training on career choice) controlling for prior decisions.
Methods:

▪ IRB permission was secured.
▪ Data were collected from before and after 2 LIC cohorts (N=115)
▪ Student data from communities <15,000 (N=11) population were compared with students in larger communities (N=104).
Pre-LIC Career Plans

![Bar chart showing career plans in rural and non-rural areas.](image)

- Rural: Not Primary Care (orange), Undecided (yellow), Yes Primary Care (green)
- Non-Rural: Not Primary Care (orange), Undecided (yellow), Yes Primary Care (green)
End of-LIC Career Plans

- Rural
  - Not Primary Care: 10
  - Undecided: 20
  - Yes Primary Care: 80

- Non-Rural
  - Not Primary Care: 40
  - Undecided: 30
  - Yes Primary Care: 20
Looking just at Students who started as Undecided and decided based on the LIC.

- Rural:
  - Not Primary Care: 0
  - Yes Primary Care: 70

- Non-Rural:
  - Not Primary Care: 60
  - Yes Primary Care: 10
Decisions Regarding Primary Care Before and During LIC

- Rural Decided No
- Rural Decided Yes
- Non Rural Decided No
- Non Rural Decided Yes

Decided Before LIC
Decided During LIC
Conclusions

• Most students in rural and non-rural sites begin LIC “undecided” regarding career choice.
• In communities with population less than 15,000 student decisions tend to lean toward primary care during LIC.
• In communities larger than 15,000, students usually make decisions outside of primary care during LICs.
Discussion – Possible Explanation

• Variety of clinical experiences found in primary care clinics was significantly greater in small communities (See our Tuesday 11:00 am presentation)
• It is possible that the narrower scope of primary care practice in larger communities may make it less interesting.
Questions????

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