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Knowledge and attitudes toward family medicine at the second year of the degree and election of specialty

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Objective: A cold climate towards primary care (PC) in the medical academia would constitute a barrier to choosing Family Medicine (FM) as a career option. This study was designed to determine medical students' knowledge of and attitudes towards FM at the second year of the degree predicts the election of FM as career.

Method: This is a cohort study. Before taking a course in PC in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years, 159 2nd students were asked to respond to the brief CAMF (Spanish acronym for "Knowledge and Attitudes towards Family Medicine"), a questionnaire with 21 closed response items (5 options on a Likert scale). All of them were investigated about the election of specialty in 2013, 2014, based on the information provided by the Ministry of Health in its web.

Statistical analysis was performed with SPSS 17.0: comparison of proportions (chi square) and means (Student t test).

Results: The mean age was 19.2 years (SD:0.88), ranging from 18 to 28 years;78.0% were women. The specialty chosen was known in 139 students:17 (12.2%) chose FM,17 pediatrics,11 internal medicine,10 gynecology, 35 internal medicine specialties, 31 other surgical specialties and 18 others.

Before starting the PC course 30.8% of students said they would like to become a family doctor in the future;58.8% for those who chose FM, significantly ($p=0.01$) bigger than 25.4% for the others. But only 4.3% considered it to be their first career choice (no statistical differences between both groups).

The brief CAMF score range was -3 to 31 (mean:16.4; SD:6.2). Graduates who chose FM had mean 19.2 (SD:6.1), significantly higher than the 15.8 (SD:6.1) of the others ($p=0.037$).

Conclusions: Family Medicine is a minority option as specialty. Those who choose MF score higher in the CAMF, so this could be a predictor of choice of specialty.