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Sicilian GP trainees interest in abroad exchanges: a cross sectional study

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Background and Aim: it is known that international health experiences have several benefits on medical trainees and the Vasco da Gama Movement offer different exchange options for GP trainees to attend a primary care practice among different European Countries. Nonetheless, participation rates are quite low in Italy, and extremely low in Sicily. The aim of the study was to assess knowledge about Vasco da Gama Movement between Sicilian GP trainees and to investigate propension and influencing factors on participating in international exchange programmes.

Methods: a questionnaire was developed based on literature to measure variables that could influence GP trainees choice to attend an international exchange during their training period. The questionnaire was administered to all trainees, anonymously and voluntarily, that were present at the weekly lecture meeting. Chi square test, T-student and ANOVA were used to assess differences across groups of categorical and continuous variables, respectively.

Results: 155 out of 204 trainee answered (76%) and only 44 knew about VdGM (28,9%). 78 (52%) wrote they would attend an exchange with the current known obstacles, while excluding obstacles participation rates peaked at 94,8% of respondents. Trainees who already joined any kind of exchange programme were more likely to attend one in the current conditions ($P=0,031$), but surprisingly there was an inverse association with trainee knowing about VdGM less likely to participate on an exchange at the very moment ($P=0,04$). Most influencing factors were the need of taking personal days off and economical reasons.

Conclusions: lot can be improved to diffuse knowledge about VdGM and its Hippokrates exchange programme, also more efforts need to be done to remove barriers keeping GP trainees away from an international experience.