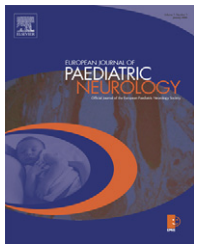
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF PAEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY 10 (2006) 267–269

ELSEVIER

Official Journal of the European Paediatric Neurology Society



Newsletter



We are happy to publish in our newsletter the paper from Sevgi Keles et al , studying why students choose to become (or not become) a pediatric neurologist.

Anyone involved in training and teaching in the field of pediatric neurology might find interesting points in this study. Any comments on the subject or discussionpoints can be send to the newsletter editor and will be made available in the next newsletter.

DETERMINATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS' INTEREST TOWARDS PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY:

Comparison of two universities Selcuk University Meram Medical Faculty and Gazi University Medical

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Pediatric neurology is a developing field of expertise in our country, as in many countries and the interest shown by medical students towards it is low. Determining the level of interest shown by medical students in pediatric neurology would provide them with strategies to the development of their increased interest in this field while making career plans. Up to 54% of pediatricians refer more than 90% of their children with neurologic complaints to pediatric neurologists.[1] This indicates the intensive need for physicians specialized in this field. This study is important to determine the level of interest shown by medical students to pediatric neurology and offer recommendations aiming to increase their interest in this field. Also, it compares two universities in terms of their level of interest in the subject of study.

Three hundred and eighty two students still being trained in medical schools of Selcuk University and Gazi University and/or completed their rotation in pediatric neurology were included in the study. A questionnaire consisting of 14 questions revealing their interest in child neurology, instead of personal information, was face-to-face applied to the participants between August 2003 and March 2004. One hundred and ninety seven of the students were from the Medical School of Gazi University and 185 were from the Medical School of Selcuk University. During the study period, pediatric neurology training was both clinically and theoretically provided in Selcuk University by a pediatrician and in Gazi University by child neurologists.

The questions in the questionnaire were consisted of two parts. The first part included questions concerning the sociodemographical information of the students and the presence of a neurological disorder in their relatives or family members. The questions of the second part aimed to determine the preferences for their career development and whether they were interested in pediatric neurology. In this part, the students were asked to choose one of the options in respect to their career preferences as following: 1—Pediatrics, 2—Other specialities, 3—General Practice, 4—I could not decide. In addition, questions were asked in order to evaluate their opinions, experiences and observations in pediatric neurology. The answers for these questions were as follows: 1—Disagree, 2—Agree partly, 3—Agree moderately, 4—Agree definitely. In this part, the students were also asked about the most interesting and negative features of rotation in neurology and their proposals on how to eliminate those negative aspects. The findings were expressed in the form of mean±standard deviation (SD). In the statistical evaluation of the questions in the questionnaire, Mann–Witney *U*-test, chi-square, likert scale was used.

1090-3798/$ - see front matter
doi:10.1016/j.ejpn.2006.09.001

Table 1 – Result of the Likert scala items examining students'determining, experiences, impressions and interest in pediatric neurology (mean Likert scale score [mean] and standard deviation [SD]. Maximum score 4)

	Selcuk Mean±SD $n=185$	Gazi Mean±SD $n=197$	p
Pediatric neurology teaching is difficult	2.79±1.08	2.79±1.0	$p>0.05$
Identifying of neurologic signs is difficult	2.42±0.95	2.50±0.96	$p>0.05$
Limited treatments are available	3.08±0.93	2.69±0.90	$p<0.001$
Neurologic diseases are interesting, complicated	3.23±0.91	3.00±0.93	$p<0.01$
Children are uncooperating, difficult to examining	3.14±0.94	2.92±0.95	$p<0.05$
Most neurologic diseases have poor prognosis	3.08±2.29	2.65±0.92	$p<0.01$
Pediatric neurology training requires long period	2.73±1.02	2.71±0.98	$p>0.05$
Total score	20.47±1.16	19.26±0.94	$p<0.02$

Of the students participating in the study, 46.33% were female, 53.66% were male and the mean age was 23.13±1.3 years. There was no statistically significant difference between the properties of participants of two universities in terms of sex, marital status, the presence of a family member with neurological disorder or the presentation of a family member with a background of medical education, and students' preference for pediatric neurology as the first choice. While 12.8% of the students stated that they were planning to choose pediatrics as the field of specialization in the future, there was no difference between two universities in terms of this response (Gazi: 12.6%, Selcuk: 12.9%). Two hundred and sixty seven of the students (69.8%) stated that they would choose other fields of specialization. Also, 0.54% of the students participating in the study from Selcuk University and 1.52% of the students from Gazi University, consisting 1.04% of all students, were planning to choose pediatric neurology as the specialization field. In Gazi University, the interest of students in pediatric neurology was higher, and this difference was statistically significant (Table 1). The number of the students from Gazi University answering that the most interesting feature of pediatric neurology was the option of helping children with neurological disorder was higher than the number of the students from Selcuk University to a statistically significant extent ($x^2 = 20.12$, $p = 0.000$). When the most interesting features of pediatric neurology were asked, 25.1% of the students answered that it required challenging and detailed experience. The students related their low interest in pediatric neurology to the limited treatment options (31.9%). Students most common suggestions for the improvement of the child neurology training were to increase clinical teaching and exposure to more cases (27.74%). There was no significant difference between two universities in terms of these answers.

The fact that medical students think child diseases are more complicated, children are uncooperative and difficult to examine causes them to give less importance to pediatric neurology in their priority list.[2] In our study, it was found that 12.8% of the students preferred pediatrics as their first choice in their career plans. When the rate of students choosing pediatrics as their first choice is considered, the rate of preference for pediatric neurology in our country can be said not to be so low. While there was not significant difference between two universities in terms of choice, the rate of preference of pediatric neurology was higher in Gazi University. Experienced and successful clinical trainers are strongly influential on the decisions made by the students in respect to their field of specialization.[3] It was also reported that the graduates of the universities which compass large departments of pediatric neurology and have many pediatric neurologists prefer pediatric neurology as their first choice in their career plans.[3,4] In our study, the most effective negative features of neurology were reported to be the limited treatment opportunities in both universities. It may be thought that if students are exposed to more common and less complicated neurology patients, their interests in the field may be increased further.[1,2] We believe that training of the students on the inpatients whose general situation and prognosis are poor is an important factor which causes them to show decreased interest in the field.

The results of this study confirmed that the general interest of the medical students in this field is low. Previous studies reported that 45% of the students will change their career preferences in the future.[5] This encourages us to be hopeful that we can increase their interest in pediatric neurology in the future. We believe that this study will enlighten future studies in respect to the fact that this study has evaluate medical students'interest in pediatric neurology, determined their proposal towards increasing this interest and indicated the importance that this training should be given by pediatric neurologists.

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The Seventh Congress of the European paediatric Neurology Society will be held in Kusadasi, near Izmire on 26–29 September 2007. The scientific topics and other information can be viewed on tue Congress.
website: www.epns2007.org

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