

Title:

Factors deterring UK medical graduates from pursuing a career in Trauma & Orthopaedics – Results of a National Survey.

Background:

Since the introduction of national recruitment for speciality training in Trauma and Orthopaedics(T&O) in 2013, the competition ratio has fallen by more than a half in just four years. The goal of this study is to explore factors that discourage graduating medical students' from pursuing a career in T&O.

Methods:

An online questionnaire aimed at graduating final-year students was emailed to UK medical schools between Feb'17 and July'17. A 3-point Likert scale was used to assess factors that discourage students from pursuing a career in T&O.

Results:

We received 236 responses. Seventy-eight per cent (183/236) ruled out T&O as their future speciality. Sixty-two per cent of students stated that lack of early exposure to the speciality and unsociable working hours discouraged them from pursuing a career in T&O. Inadequate undergraduate training (57%) and paucity of positive mentorship (52%) were also found to disincentivize students from following this career. Additionally, perceived high competition ratio (51%), uncertainty about geographical location (50%), length of training (50%), technical aspects of orthopaedic surgery (46%), and high male to female ratio (44%) were identified as deterring factors. Contractual changes (23%) and cost of training (32%) were considered to be relatively less important deterrents.

Conclusions:

This study shows that the quality of undergraduate training, timing of clinical exposure, gender parity, access to influential mentors, and work-life balance are areas that need urgent improvement to increase graduating students' interest in this speciality.

Implications:

As less than 15% of UK foundation doctors undertake a rotation in T&O, medical schools remain the primary source of orthopaedic training for the majority of medical graduates. To ensure that T&O remains a desirable and competitive speciality in the future, universities and health education boards must work collaboratively to improve the provision of undergraduate T&O curriculum and implement robust regional/national recruitment strategies.