

Correspondence

Enhancing students' motivations through early exposure in actual settings is key

When we read Ananthamurthy and Mani's article,¹ we were delighted that they conducted a study similar to our interviews, focusing on motivations and deriving similar results, albeit with a completely different set of interviewees.

Shortage of health workers has long been a global issue.² While research on developing countries has accelerated,³ we empirically posit that recruiting and retaining health workers continue to be difficult in developed countries, as well. This was the rationale for our survey. Furthermore, to recruit future health workers, it is important to find potential students with proper motivation and enhance their motivations.⁴

We conducted interviews with 21 newly enrolled students who were interested in primary healthcare. Our interviews focused on the factors affecting motivation for this career choice. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, codified and grouped into similar categories. We identified six factors: (i) intrinsic properties; (ii) longing for social contributions; (iii) influence of past important events; (iv) existence of role models; (v) advice from close relatives; and (vi) future stable working environment (Table I).

Ananthamurthy and Mani found important negative factors in their analysis, including pathology being an 'invisible speciality', being 'unaware of the pathologist's role', 'social unacceptance' and 'lack of awareness regarding training curriculum', amongst students aspiring for a pathology career.¹ Although our survey was not regarding a pathology career, we were surprised to obtain similar results. Our findings revealed that if students can find 'visible' role

models and feel 'social contributions/acceptance', their motivations are enhanced. Students can attain these factors through early exposure in actual settings. A previous study found that enhancing intrinsic motivation is important for primary care physicians to sustain community-based education.⁵ If our findings apply to Ananthamurthy and Mani's study,¹ 'affecting motivation through early exposure' may be effective in recruiting and retaining potential students.

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Conflicts of interest. None declared

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Manabu Murakami

Center for Medical Education and International Relations
Faculty of Medicine
Hokkaido University

Kotaro Matoba

k-matoba@med.hokudai.ac.jp

Hideki Hyodoh

Department of Forensic Medicine
Faculty of Medicine
Hokkaido University
Sapporo
Japan

TABLE I. Motivational factors influencing career choice as health workers

Factor	Explanation and excerpts
Intrinsic properties	Personal interests, individual characteristics and innate ability: <i>'I've been wanting to interact with people. That's why I want to work in a hospital (not a research lab).'</i>
Longing for social contributions	Altruism with the desire to help those in need: <i>'I can support my patients. Social contribution is priority.'</i>
Influence of past important events	Confronted with and impressed by significant events: <i>'When my grandfather had Parkinson's disease and died of pneumonia, I wished I could have cured his illness.'</i>
Existence of role models	Encounter with someone who is enthusiastic and dedicated to work: <i>'My father is a doctor. When I was a child, I saw the way he treated a patient. I felt he was so cool.'</i>
Advice from close relatives	Recommendation from relatives including parents or siblings: <i>'When I couldn't make a career choice, my mother recommended that I become a radiographer, not a laboratory technician.'</i>
Future stable working environment	Taking life events and work–life balance into account: <i>'Getting a qualification of nurse is important. Even if I become pregnant and take maternity leave, I can return to work.'</i>

Igniting minds: Debates enhance engagement in small group teaching for postgraduates

Debates consist of constructive argument between two persons or teams that defend opposing positions.¹ The topic is framed as a closed question that can only be answered in the affirmative or in the negative. Each position is defended by a team consisting of 3–5 members, typically. The team prepares beforehand the question of the debate from both positions (for and against).² The debate is divided into three types of turns, each with different functions: introduction or affirmative (introduction of the topic and line of argument), rebuttal (defence of one team's arguments and rebuttal of those of the opposing team) and conclusion (summary of interactions and arguments proposed in the debate).² Usually, the debate lasts for half to one hour.^{1,2}

The learning activities that require students to work together, share and apply information and reflect on their interactions with peers