

CORRESPONDANCE/LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR : THE INFLUENCE OF CLINICAL TEACHERS AS ROLE MODELS ON THE CHOICE OF SPECIALTY AMONG LEBANESE MEDICAL STUDENTS

Sir,

We have read with interest the article by Khater et al. published in your journal [1]. The authors have analyzed factors influencing the choice of specialty among graduating medical students in Lebanon. They found that the impact of clinical teachers as role models was perceived by the students to be "little to somewhat important" only. The influence of role models had a score of 2.26 on a 5-point Likert scale and was ranked 14th among 27 listed items.

We have evaluated, in a recent study, the perception of clinical teachers as role models by students in a Lebanese medical school [2]. Ninety interns and residents from different training level and specialties have responded to an anonymous self-administered questionnaire about the characteristics and the impact of their role models. In this study, only 38% of the trainees were influenced by their role models in the choice of their specialties. Responses were generally comparable between levels of training and between medical and surgical specialties.

Our results are in agreement with the study of Khater et al., indicating that clinical teachers as role models have a limited influence on the choice of specialty among medical students in Lebanon. These findings are in contrast with reports from western countries showing that "positive physician example" significantly affected the career pathways of interns and residents [3-5]. Reasons accounting for these differences are not apparent and can benefit from further studies. It is important, in Lebanon, to ensure that medical teachers are excellent role models and to reinforce their influence on career choices. This

may increase medical students' recruitment into particular specialties in order to meet national goals.

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IN RESPONSE

To the Editor,

Thank you for forwarding to us the remarks made by Dr. Yazigi et al. It is interesting to find that a study addressing interns and residents (at the institution studied) also perceive the role of the role models to be so minor.

Unlike our study which addressed responses from medical students who attended the two main teaching medical schools with primary care in the curriculum, this study limited itself to a single institution, thus limiting generalizability of the findings. Furthermore it is difficult to conclude from their study that improved role models can influence physician career choices, since the study

population in question had already selected their careers prior to completing the administered questionnaires.

We would be interested to collaborate with Doctor Yazigi's team in order to further expand and evaluate the issues which govern training physicians' career choices in Lebanon.

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