

Emigration plans of students and interns of the Medical University of Warsaw

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Abstract— The goal of the research was to analyze trends in the extent of medical healthcare workers' emigration and to define the profile of the students of Warsaw Medical University who wish to work in foreign countries. Empirical studies were based on a survey distributed among undergraduate students and graduates of Medical University of Warsaw. The majority of students and trainees of the Medical University of Warsaw are eager to look for a job in the foreign countries (58.6% of 2007 respondents surveyed). The willingness to emigrate was the greatest in the faculty of: medicine, diabetology and physical therapy. The most frequent destinations were: the UK, the USA, Germany and Spain. Data from the period of 2007-2011 is insufficient to clearly indicate long term trend in group's attitude towards emigration.

Keywords- emigration, migration from Poland, healthcare workers

I. INTRODUCTION

Medical staff is a pillar of any health care system. Efficiency and quality of medical services is dictated primarily by knowledge and skills of employee. Despite the need for care of the medical staff, subsequent reforms of the health care system in Poland, had a negative impact on the situation of workers, inter alia: a decrease in employment rates (mainly through the reduction), a growing dissatisfaction with the low wages and poor job satisfaction in the profession. The growing frustration and disappointment in working in own country, as well as simplification of migration for health professionals under the Polish accession to the European Union effected in more and more Polish health care workers seeking work abroad.

In the absence of national long-term healthcare policy, difficult working conditions, as well as difficulties in developing and improvement of professional skills younger doctors and nurses more often consider the possibility of emigration. Migration of Polish health care workers, although not a new phenomenon in the history of our country in the last decade intensified, especially due to the opportunity to get substantially better earnings, better opportunities for education and professional development offered by countries of Western Europe. [1].

The intense migration flows induced by the Polish accession to the European Union and the opening of some

Member States labor markets have had a strong impact not only on the economic sphere, but also in the conditions, manner of functioning and public perception of the health care system in Poland. The phenomenon of increased emigration of medical personnel has become the subject of a wide-ranging discussion that, in the absence of scientific studies often takes the form of journalistic debate. [2,3,4,5].

A. Aim of the study

1. Analysis of migration plans of students and trainees of the faculties of the Medical University of Warsaw.
2. Determination of extent of young healthcare professionals' emigration in the next years by studying propensity to emigrate among students and trainees of the recent years of the Medical University of Warsaw.

B. Materials and methods

The survey was addressed to a group of 3,026 last year students and alumni of the Medical University of Warsaw throughout the 4 academic years of 2007/2008, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.

Once verified, there were finally 2007 fully completed, valid questionnaires, which amounts to 68% of the targeted population. For statistical data analysis researchers used specialist statistical software package SPSS 1.7 and Statistica 9.0.

II. RESULTS

In the study the key question posed to respondents was: "Have you considered looking for a job in your profession in other country?" On this question, most of the students (58.6%, $n = 1\ 176$) answered positively. Employment opportunities abroad does not take into account 41.1% ($n = 831$) of the respondents. The research has also shown the presence of a statistically significant difference in size of groups that declare willingness to seek employment abroad distinguished by the field of study and ($\text{Chi}^2 = 62.18$, $\text{df} = 6$, $p = 0.0001$). (Table 1)

TABLE I. EMIGRATION PLANS BY FACULTIES

		Declaration of willingness to work abroad	Total		
			yes	no	
² Chi = 62,18; df = 6; p = 0,0001					
Faculties	medical	number	475	207	682
		% faculties	69,6%	30,4%	100,0%
	nursing	number	196	182	378
		% faculties	51,9%	48,1%	100,0%
	midwifery	number	47	56	103
		% faculties	45,6%	54,4%	100,0%
	diabetology	number	57	30	87
		% faculties	65,5%	34,5%	100,0%
	public health	number	172	167	339
		% faculties	50,7%	49,3%	100,0%
	physical therapy	number	49	34	83
		% faculties	59,0%	41,0%	100,0%
	pharmacy	number	180	155	335
		% faculties	53,7%	46,3%	100,0%
total	number	1176	831	2007	
	% faculties	58,6%	41,4%	100,0%	

Source: own study

Based on question concerning the planned date of emigration it can be noticed that the most of the respondents, who seek work abroad, plan to leave Poland within 2 to 5 years from the completion of the study / internship (30.1%). One out of three respondents wishes to achieve his or hers plan in one up to two years after graduation. Nearly a quarter of respondents (22.5%) plan to leave after 5 years from the date of completion of education at the university.

What can be disturbing is the observation that more than 40% (n = 478) of the students and trainees would like to leave the country without specifying a time frame, with the possibility to settle abroad permanently. Only 12.7% (n = 149) of respondents who declared their willingness to seek work abroad, would like to emigrate for a period of time not longer than one year.

The survey showed that one in four respondents, who consider looking for a job abroad, would like to go to the UK. Over 10% of respondents consider emigration to the United States of America. Equally popular countries taken into account by the students and trainees as a destination country are Germany (8.72%) and Spain (7.89%). More than a half of the respondents prefer to emigrate to one of these four countries (UK, USA, Germany or Spain) (Fig. 1).

Respondents had quite strong interest in looking for a job in the Nordic countries, most of which were: Norway (7.3%) and Sweden (7.15%). Apart from mentioned above, the list of top ten countries included: France (4.85%), Ireland (4.75%) and Italy (4.31%).

One of the crucial elements of the study was to analyze trends in the emigration plans of young health professionals. Due to continuation of the research over the four years it was possible to develop longitudinal analysis of willingness to emigration among research target group.

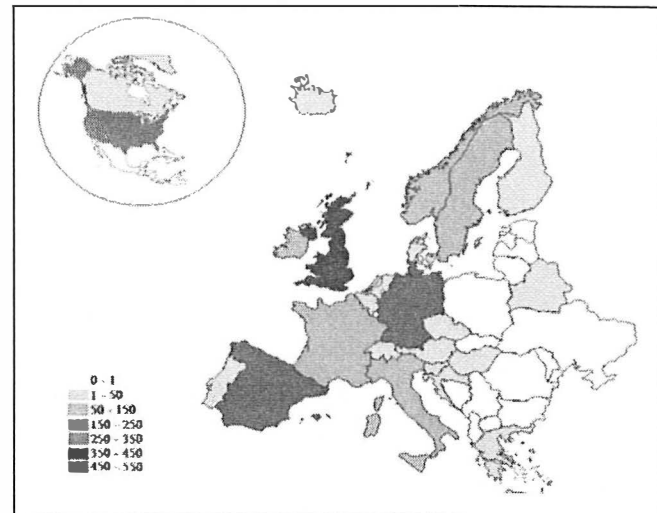


Figure 1. The planned country of emigration

The most numerous group of people who consider the possibility of working abroad, was observed in the academic year of 2007/2008 (62.7%), in the following research periods this rate fell to 55.8% and then jumped to 58.2% in the academic year of 2010/2011 (Fig. 2).

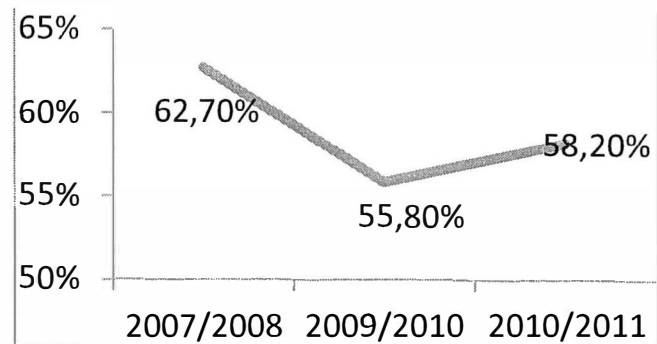


Figure 2. Longitudinal analysis of declaration of willingness to seek work abroad of students and trainees of the Medical University of Warsaw in the years 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011

Research data was collected from 2007 until 2011. However, as shown at the figure above there is no clear trend in group's attitude towards emigration. In order to predict future outlook on emigration among young health care workers it is necessary to continue research in the consecutive years.

III. DISCUSSION

There a number of similar research projects concerning emigration of healthcare professionals in recent years. Surprisingly Interesting studies were conducted among nursing students in Hungary. The survey concerning nurses' career plans was distributed among all nursing students of III and IV year. It turned out that the percentage of nurses who are considering the possibility of seeking employment abroad is higher among Hungarian students than in Poland. Out of the

267 nurses surveyed 57% plans to seek work abroad (in the present study, the percentage of nursing students interested in migration was 51.9%) [6].

Although in relation to international research MUW nursing students consider the possibility of leaving the country less likely, in the group of future doctors a situation seems to be quite different. Studies conducted among students of a medical faculty in Croatia showed that interest in emigration among the representatives of this specialty is less than half as compared to Poland. In Croatia, such plans were declared by 33% of respondents, while in the present study, the rate among Polish medical students was almost 70%. It should, however, be taken into account that the questionnaire used in the Croatian study was differently structured. The answer to the question about plans for emigration was conditional and based on the assumption that the respondent did not get into desired specialization. This condition influenced results as students approached opportunity of looking for a job abroad as a contingency in the event of failure of the intended career path. [7]

Much higher percentage of medical students interested in finding a job in a foreign country was observed in a study of students of eight medical universities in South Africa. The analysis of data collected from students in their final year at the faculty of medicine showed that more than a half of them (55%) were planning to go abroad after completing their education. [8]

Presented study raised yet another aspect of emigration of health care professionals. Statistical analysis showed that in fact there is a group of students who at the stage of faculty selection directed themselves by the possibility of looking for a job abroad. This reason for taking up studies at the particular faculty was declared by 33.1% of people taking a degree in nursing, 26.5% in physiotherapy and equally, more than 24% of the faculty of medicine and faculty of midwifery. This issue has not been addressed so far in other studies. It shows how the will to emigrate from the country is widespread among young Polish medical staff. (Fig.3)

Recent history of Poland is characterized by a large concentration of target countries of emigration. In 1990's, during period of Polish political and economic transformation key direction of emigration were Germany (over 38% of the total number of migrants) and the United States and Italy (both summing up for 68% of the total number of outgoing). Polish accession to the European Union radically changed the geography of migration. The main country of destination switched from Germany to the United Kingdom [9]. Some differences in relation to other studies on the mobility of medical students can be shown in presented research results due to relatively low rank of the Nordic countries in a group of desired destinations. In the present study more than a half of the respondents prefer to emigrate to one of the three countries: UK, USA and Germany. This is probably due to the period of the study, which coincides with the period of economic crisis in Europe. The image of the Nordic countries that suffered the negative effects of the crisis created by the media may contribute significantly to the decline in interest in finding a job in the northern Europe.

Although direction of emigration attracts attention one should not underestimate the importance of declared length of stay of young health professionals abroad. The analysis shows that over 40% of students and trainees of WUM who consider the possibility of emigration, would like to leave the country without specifying a time frame with the possibility of settling permanently. This observation is far more worrying as such a high percentage of students planning long term migration stays confirmed by other Polish studies [10, 11].

One of the important, negative issues of young, Polish health care workers emigration is time in which students intend to leave Poland. The most numerous group of students who plan to emigrate are those who want to leave from 2 to 5 years after their graduation, which is just after completing post-graduate internship and obtaining necessary experience required by foreign employers. This means that people who are willing to leave Poland are those who graduated from studies funded by the state, and gain qualifications and experience in internships co-financed by the state as well.

That situation is therefore unfavorable for the Polish economy as it diminishes future creation of GDP by those people by working in the country for the sake of taxpayers who earlier invested in education of such people. Migration is a phenomenon which balance of gains and losses is difficult to evaluate, as all countries (both sending and receiving) may profit and loose. The fact is that the migration of health professionals in the age of globalization has become a challenge for all countries. In Poland, although the migration of health professionals has become a noticeable issue it is certainly not the mass problem.

It is difficult to assess whether medical professionals departures will be intensified or weakened. This depends largely on the situation in the Polish health care system especially on the level of remuneration but also on working conditions and the intensity of the active policy of recruitment of Polish citizens of employees from the foreign countries.

Recently, both in Poland and in the Europe the issue of international migration has become an issue raised not only by

Did you consider working abroad when deciding on study faculty?

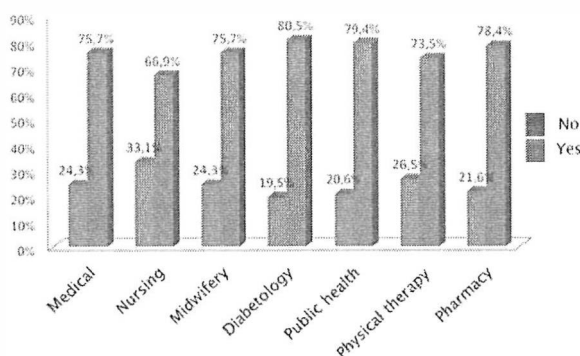


Figure 3. Respondents who chose study faculty due to opportunity of working abroad

the general public, but also by politicians. The European Union notes the growing trend of internationalization of migration issues, which requires changes to the existing concepts of national governments.

IV. CONCLUSION:

1. The majority of students and trainees of the Medical University of Warsaw are eager to look for a job in the foreign countries (58.6% of 2007 respondents surveyed)

2. The willingness to look for a job abroad among students of the Medical University of Warsaw is the greatest in the faculty of: medicine, diabetology and physical therapy.

3. The most frequent destinations are: the UK, the USA, Germany and Spain

4. Data from the period of 2007-2011 is insufficient to clearly indicate long term trend in group's attitude towards emigration. Further studies required.

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