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## Career plans of students of dental-medical major at Medical University of Lublin in the years 2004-2012

### Abstract

**Introduction.** Higher education institutions thoroughly analyze the labor market. Knowing the career plans of students is important information showing the potential and direction of development of the labor market.

**Aim** The aim of the study was to gather information on career plans and further development of graduates of the Division of Dentistry, Medical University of Lublin in the years 2004-2012.

**Material and methods** The survey covered a group of 743 graduates of medical-dental faculty. Students filled in an anonymous questionnaire after passing the exam in conservative dentistry with endodontics. The questions concerned the location and nature of future work, as well as the desire to specialize and determining the area in which the graduate is planning to specialize.

**Results** The question: "Where are you planning to start work after graduation?" – was answered by more than 35% of the students: "In a big city outside of Lublin." Over 24% of respondents expressed a desire to return to their hometown, and 21% declared remaining in Lublin. Approximately 13.6% of respondents were considering going abroad, and about 5.65% of the students declared choosing village or a small town, as a place for future work. Among all graduated students, 45.5% would like to work in a medical joint venture, 38.5% wishing to undertake business activity in their own dental office. Only 7.4% of students declared their desire to remain at the university and carry out scientific work. The vast majority of graduates (87.35%) expressed the desire for specialization. The most frequently indicated specialization was conservative dentistry with endodontics – the choice was indicated by 22.62% of the respondents. Students expressed similar interest in further development in the field of oral surgery (20.33%), prosthodontics (20.33%) and orthodontics (18.58%).

**Conclusions** Most of the students of dental-medical major of Medical University of Lublin after graduation planned to work in Poland. The respondents were planning to work primarily in medical partnerships or to open their own dental offices. The vast majority of respondents declared a desire to get specialization.

**Keywords:** dentistry, students, career choice, education.

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### INTRODUCTION

The main goal of dental education is preparing the graduates for independent clinical practice. Evaluation of the teaching process is essential for monitoring the results of education, because no program is static and, therefore, continuous control of the quality of teaching is essential for further development. The role of curriculum is developing not only practical competencies, but also self-confidence and other attributes of professional dental care. Systematic assessment of learning outcomes is an integral part of the educational process at every level and in every specialty. This allows for estimation of the level and scope of acquired knowledge, behaviors and attitudes and skills of the student [1]. The best indicator of the quality of learning outcomes is the achieved success of university graduates in the labor market [2]. Therefore, higher education institutions thoroughly analyse the labor market. Knowing the career plans of students, which include: assessment of the chances of finding a job

in line with the major of education, willingness to work out of their place of residence or abroad, determination of the extent of the declared mobility for seeking a job, defining the ability and willingness of further education in the profession, is important information showing the potential and direction of development of the labor market. Development of entrepreneurship means new jobs, and students most often make their life choices depending on the possibility of taking or finding a job in the region [3]. Creating of new jobs preferably in accordance with education and qualifications and financially rewarding may retain the future graduates in the region [3]. The Regional Labor Office is an important source of information about the career fate of university graduates. Based on the information obtained from this unit, conclusions are drawn on the scale of unemployment among graduates of various majors of study [2]. A graduate of the dental-medical major at Medical University of Lublin is doing very well in the labor market, as indicated by the statements of the number of unemployed. In the years 2010, 2011

and 2012, the Regional Labor Office in Lublin did not report unemployed graduates of this major [2,4].

## AIM

The aim of the study was to gather information on career plans and further development of graduates of the Division of Dentistry, Medical University of Lublin in the years 2004-2012.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey covered a group of 743 graduates of medical-dental faculty. Students filled in an anonymous questionnaire after passing the exam in conservative dentistry with endodontics. The questions concerned the location and nature of future work, as well as the desire to specialize and determining the area in which the graduate is planning to specialize.

## RESULTS

The question: “Where are you planning to start work after graduation?” – was answered by more than 35% of the students “In a big city outside of Lublin”. Definitely the most common indication was Warsaw. Over 24% of respondents expressed a desire to return to their hometown, and 21% declared remaining in Lublin. Approximately 13.6% of respondents were considering going abroad – temporarily or permanently. Only a small proportion, about 5.65% of the students declared choosing village or a small town, as a place for future work. The obtained results are presented in Figure 1. While analyzing the motivations of the selection of the workplace, it was found that almost half of the respondents – 45.5% would like to work in a medical partnership. The second most common type of life preferences was indicated by the respondents interested in working on their own account, wishing to undertake business activity in their own dental office (about 38.5%). The full-time employment in the state institution is the dream of 8.6% of respondents. Only 7.4% of students declared their desire to remain at the university and carry out scientific work. Proportion of respondents with the presentation of their work place preferences is shown in Figure 2.

The paper also presents an analysis on getting specialization by the students surveyed. The vast majority of graduates (over 87%), expressed the desire for specialization. About 9% of future dentists were not interested in specializing. A small percentage of respondents (3.64%) have not yet made a final decision about this type of training. These results are presented in Figure 3.

The survey also included questions about preferences regarding the type of specialization. The most frequently indicated specialization was conservative dentistry with endodontics – the choice was indicated by 22.62% of the respondents. Equally large and similar interest (20.33%) related to further development in the field of oral surgery and prosthodontics. A slightly lower percentage of indications concerned orthodontics (18.58%), and far less interest was indicated to periodontology (5.65%) and pedodontics (4.98%). A few students related their future with getting the specialization in public health (1.35%). A small percentage of graduates (6.19%) did not determine what type of specialization to chose. These results are presented in Figure 4.

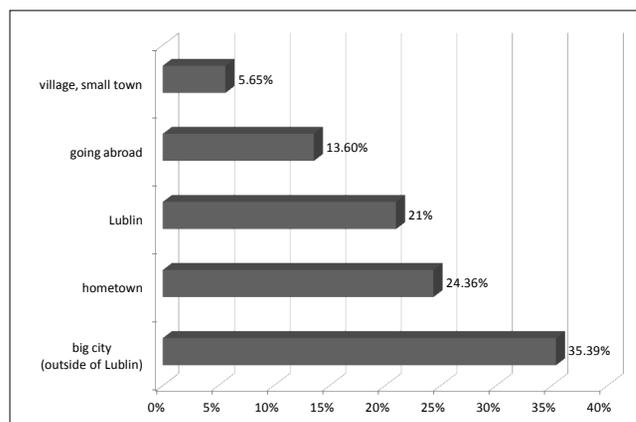


FIGURE 1. Students' preferences concerning future place of work.

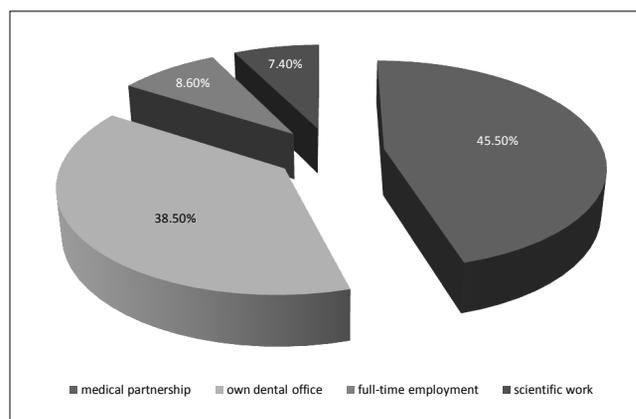


FIGURE 2. Students' preferences concerning type of the future work.

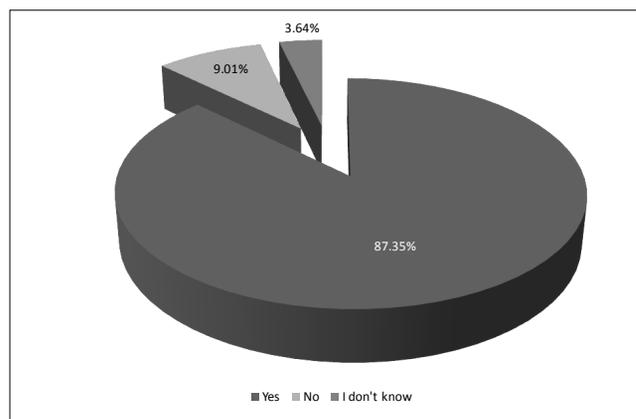


FIGURE 3. Students' plans concerning future specialization.

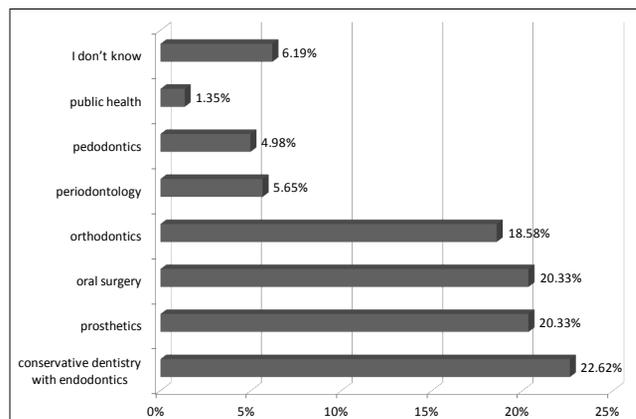


FIGURE 4. Students' preferences concerning future specialization.

## DISCUSSION

The career plans of students are affected by several factors: first of all, the desire to find a job in line with their profession, the salaries, and possibilities of development, further education and upgrading of qualifications. The willingness to work in the hometown pales into insignificance. Graduates are now more mobile.

Sociology hypothesizes about the relationship between perception of chances of finding a job with a tendency to relating one's future with a definite city or region. This is confirmed by the scientific report by Gołdyka, concerning life choices of university students in the Lublin region [3]. This report was based on survey questionnaire among 200 students [5]. Most of the respondents covered by the studies were the students of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (28.0%), students of Catholic University of Lublin – KUL (16.0%), University of Life Sciences (11.0%) and the Technical University of Lublin (10.0%), respectively. Students of other universities including the Medical University of Lublin constituted about one-third of the study group (34.0%). This selection was to “reflect proportions in the sizes of individual universities” [3,5]. The largest group included students of the humanities. It is therefore not surprising that leaving the Lublin region after graduation is more often planned by students who rate their chances of finding any job as little or none (61.9%) than by students who evaluate these opportunities as large (38.8%) [5]. According to the report, the greater the subjective assessment of the chances of getting even any job, the more likely students will choose their region for a place to live. The worse the prognosis on finding a job in the minds of students, the more likely they will choose for living in the towns or large cities outside the region. Especially Warsaw can play such a role and Lublin as well [3,5], which is also confirmed by the results obtained in our work. Our results confirm that about 21% of the surveyed graduates of dentistry would like to stay in Lublin, which gives a result similar to the data from the report by Gołdyka developed on the basis of Rydzewski research [3,5]. In a report published by the Task Force for the Recruitment, Assessment of Education and Graduates of Medical University of Lublin concerning the years 2010-2012, one can read that the desire to change their place of residence in order to find a job within the same province is declared by up to 87.2% of the graduates of dentistry, and moving to other region – by 88.4% [2,4], which gives similar results to those obtained by the authors. Whereas different results were obtained concerning the question of the willingness to go abroad to find work. In the cited report, graduates of dental-medical major of the years 2011 and 2012, were distinguished from other fields at the Medical University by a high level of willingness to go abroad. Such readiness was declared by three-quarters of the respondents i.e. 76.7% [2]. In our study, willingness to go abroad was declared by an average of 13.6% of respondents, and this percentage varied over the years: from 1.05% in 2009 to 27.4% in 2010.

The career plans are also influenced by the students' perception of socio-economic development of the region or province of the country in which they wish to plan their future. It is significant that among the medical-dental graduates

participating in our study, 56% declared willingness to work in big cities and ten times less frequently – in small towns or villages (5.65%). The report published by the Task Force for the Recruitment, Assessment of Education and Graduates of Medical University of Lublin shows that 38.1% of graduates of dental-medical major assess the development of Lublin in the medical services sector as high. Half of the graduates believe that there is an average development of the Lublin region in this aspect – 50%. It is not surprising that approximately 48% of the graduates of medical-dental major estimated their chances of finding a job in their profession in their place of residence as difficult or very difficult [2]. Especially that the data obtained in our study show that almost half of the respondents (45.5%) would like to work in a medical joint-venture company. The career plans of the Lublin region university students concerning workplaces look similarly – about 45% of students primarily plan to work at the a state employer or in the manufacturing-services sector (27.6% and 16.7%) [3,5]. Slightly different is the situation of the self-employment, that is only 15.8% of the students of the Lublin region would like to start their own business [3,5] and more than twice as many graduates of dental-medical major (38.5%). This discrepancy may indicate high self-esteem of preparation of dentistry graduates for independent clinical practice [1,6,7].

It is difficult to say whether the success of graduates in the labor market is affected by the graduation from a good, prestigious field of study, i.e. dentistry, or rather the students' approach to the issue of finding a job changes with the changes of labor market needs. In a study by the Warsaw School of Economics on the competences and skills sought by employers in graduates entering the labor market, the most frequently mentioned competencies were: effective communication, openness to learning and continuous improvement, and the participation and involvement in the work. The ideal graduate should be flexible and have the ability to adapt, know foreign languages, have the ability to work in a team and be responsible. Employers also stressed the use of the period of study to get a variety of experiences (internships, work, trips abroad, student organizations, associations, sports clubs, volunteering, etc.) [8]. Graduates of the Medical University of Lublin are willing to undertake further education, which will make finding a job easier. Consistent with the idea of lifelong learning program, the graduates are aware that currently the employee should keep on training throughout a lifetime [9]. This opinion is expressed by 80% of graduates [2]. Only 23.2% of students of various universities in the Lublin region are planning further education after graduation [3,5].

Students of dental-medical major are characterized by a high level of educational aspirations [10,11]. Already during their studies every fourth respondent takes additional activity in scientific circles, 39.5% of them participate in additional courses and/or training, every third person is a member of student organization other than the academic circle [2]. It is not surprising that a high percentage of graduates of dental-medical major plan to continue education after graduation. Graduates are interested in courses and trainings (54.7%) and language courses (54.7%). In contrast, almost 38% of graduates intend to undertake doctoral studies. This

is incompatible with the results obtained in our study, in which only 7.4% of respondents would like to carry

on research work. Rydzewski also obtained the same results – 7.4% of university students of the Lublin region declare their willingness to carry out research work [3,5]. Postgraduate studying is intended by 17% of graduates of dental-medical major (4). In the case of 80%, it will be specialization (oral surgery, orthodontics, prosthodontics or conservative dentistry) [2,4]. This is confirmed by the authors: the willingness to get specialization is declared by the vast majority of respondents i.e. 87.35%. Most indicated specialization in the years 2004-2012 is a conservative dentistry with endodontics, which is selected by 22.62% of respondents. Equally often graduates declare further development in the fields of prosthodontics (20.33%), dental surgery (20.33%) or orthodontics (18.58%).

Currently, the labor market puts more emphasis on competences and skills, not only on the knowledge of graduates. According to a study conducted by the Warsaw School of Economics, more and more entrepreneurs and representatives of institutions dealing with support for unemployed people believe that universities too often train for the purpose of research, not the economy [8]. Also, graduates appreciate the practical skills gained at university most [2,4,12]. It is positive that graduates of dental-medical major believe that they have mastered practical knowledge to a high degree [1,2,6,7], which proves adjusting of the curriculum of study to the current needs of the labor market.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Most of the students of dental-medical major of Medical University of Lublin of the years 2004-2012 after graduating planned to work in Poland.
2. The respondents were planning to work primarily in medical partnerships or to open their own dental offices.
3. The vast majority of respondents declared a desire to get specialization.

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