

## Post-graduation plans of medical students — Perspective from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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Madam, medical students and newly minted physicians from several developing countries including Pakistan,

recent medical graduates reported 60.4% planned to seek post-graduation, with America or England as the

Table: Demographic characteristics and responses to questions on post-graduation plans by sex.

		Male (N = 168)	Female (N = 210)	P-value
Satisfied with the decision to go to medical college.	Yes	153 (%)	188 (%)	0.623**
	No	13 (%)	16 (%)	
	Unsure	2 (%)	6 (%)	
Planning to do post-graduation and acquire higher qualifications.	Yes	148 (88.1%)	175 (83.3%)	0.406
	No	14 (8.3%)	23 (11%)	
	Unsure	6 (3.6%)	12 (5.7%)	
Planning to go to USA to acquire higher qualifications.	Yes	64 (38.1%)	59 (28.1%)	0.028*
	No	78 (46.4%)	98 (46.7%)	
	Unsure	26 (15.5%)	53 (25.2%)	
Planning to go to England to acquire higher qualifications.	Yes	60 (35.7%)	48 (22.8%)	0.017*
	No	76 (45.2%)	107 (51%)	
	Unsure	32 (19.1%)	55 (26.2%)	
Planning to do FCPS in Pakistan.	Yes	94 (56%)	122 (58.1%)	0.149
	No	58 (34.5%)	57 (27.1%)	
	Unsure	16 (9.5%)	31 (14.8%)	
Planning to go to either USA or England to acquire higher qualifications and plans to return afterwards.	Yes	120 (85.7%)	138 (80.7%)	0.290
	No	9 (6.4%)	10 (5.8%)	
	Unsure	11 (7.9%)	23 (13.5%)	
(excluded from percentages & Chi-square test)	Not Applicable	28	39	
Have used internet to learn more about post-graduation opportunities abroad.	Yes	97 (57.7%)	103 (49%)	0.093
	No	71 (42.3%)	107 (51%)	
Have used internet for studying/preparing for professional exams in medical college.	Yes	145 (86.3%)	167 (79.5%)	0.084
	No	23 (13.7%)	43 (20.5%)	

\*Statistically significant. \*\* Fisher Exact Test (owing to cell size less than 5).

plan post-graduation studies in America and England.<sup>1-5</sup> A study in Lahore of 275 final year medical students and

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most favoured countries.<sup>4</sup> While another study in Karachi from two private medical colleges reported 65% to 95% of final year medical students had post-graduate study plans abroad.<sup>5</sup> There are no such studies from Islamabad/Rawalpindi, or any studies on year 3 or 4 medical students in Pakistan.

A cross-sectional survey with convenience sampling was conducted among male and female, year 3-5 medical students in Islamabad and Rawalpindi at various medical colleges; to study their post-graduation plans, and satisfaction with their decision to go to medical college, from January-June 2011. An interviewer-administered, pre-tested, structured questionnaire with close-ended questions was used by two female and two male trained graduate students, after obtaining verbal consent and ensuring confidentiality. Results were analyzed using STATA-12, by applying chi-square and Fisher Exact tests to assess the independent relationships between categorical variables studied and gender. Statistical significance was defined by two-sided P-values of <0.05.

Cumulatively, 378 students were interviewed; 168 (44.4%) male and 210 (55.6%) female respondents. Table, provides the frequency of plans for post-graduation, and answers to other questions asked, disaggregated by sex, and statistically significant associations. Cumulatively, 341 (90.2%) students were satisfied by their decision to join medical college; and 323 (85.4%) reported post-graduation plans. The only statistically significant associations were between males who were more likely to plan for going to America or England compared to females. While, 216 (57.1%) of all respondents reported plans to do FCPS in Pakistan. There was some overlap

between these post-graduation plans; there were 31 females and 30 males who reported plans for doing both i.e. FCPS as well as going to America, while 35 females and 40 males reported plans for FCPS and going to England for post-graduation.

Post-graduation plans were common in both sexes, with males more likely to be opting for going abroad; the fact that some respondents were reporting such plans in multiple countries perhaps reflects the fact that they are still in college and crystallizing plans. High internet use for studying and seeking educational opportunities abroad augurs the need for early mentoring so as to better guide and prepare students to excel as future physicians.

## References

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