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A Survey of the Beliefs Regarding International Emergency Medicine Among Fourth-Year Medical Students Planning on Matching in Emergency Medicine

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Background: International emergency medicine (IEM) has recently experienced a growth in recognition in the United States, including the formation of interest groups among major EM bodies and the creation of fellowships for physicians interested in specialized post-graduate training.

Objectives: To evaluate medical students' attitudes toward IEM and to determine the effects these attitudes have on their residency selection.

Methods: Study Design: Cross Sectional survey. Data collection: An anonymous, eight-question online survey was distributed to all members of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM) Resident and Student section. This survey was also distributed to fourth-year medical students rotating through the emergency department at Los Angeles County & University of Southern California.

Results: Ninety-eight surveys were collected, 61 from rotating students and 37 from the AAEM mailing. There were no statistically significant differences in responses between the two groups. 49.4% (95%CI=39%-60%) of respondents have been exposed to IEM, and 52.3% (42%-63%) have participated in international health projects. 97.6%(94%-100%) agree that IEM is an exciting career option. 93.7%(88%-99%) said programs with IEM opportunities are more appealing than those without, and 68.9% (57%-81%) said the presence of IEM opportunities would be a factor in rank list. 67.1%(56%-78%) believe that IEM requires formal public health training, and 73.8% (64%-84%) believe it requires tropical medicine training. 68.3%(58%-79%) of respondents speak a language in addition to English. This subset was more likely to have participated in IEM projects previously (p=.026) but not more likely to make match choices based on IEM.

Conclusions: Half of medical students surveyed have prior experience in international health, and most agree that international emergency medicine is an exciting career option. Over two thirds believe that presence of IEM opportunities will be a factor in their match list decision.