

MEETING ABSTRACT

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Investigating the Irish brain drain: factors influencing migration intentions among medical students

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Background

Ireland has the highest level of medical emigration in Europe with an increasing demand for physicians worldwide [1,2]. This has received considerable public and political interest. However, few studies have described the migration intentions of medical students at the undergraduate level [3]. Our study aimed to describe the migration intentions of Irish medical students by nationality and identify unique factors, “push factors”, that influence their decisions.

Methods

Cross-sectional online survey of medical students in Ireland. Pearson's Chi square was utilised to determine the significance of differences in migration intentions and factors influencing migration. Free text data was thematically analysed.

Results

Of 2273 respondents, 67% were Irish, 5.3% were from other EU countries and 27.8% were from Non-EU countries. 88% of Irish students identified that they were definitely or contemplating going abroad following graduation/intern year, compared to 80% of Non-EU students and 88% of other EU students ($P < 0.001$). Training and career aspects, personal development and financial reasons were identified as key “push” factors influencing migration intentions.

Conclusions

It would be expected that a large proportion of EU and non-EU students would migrate from Ireland following

training. However, it is alarming that the intention to migrate is significantly greater among Irish students than non-EU students. As eight out of ten of all students are considering migration, initiatives to support retention should target all nationalities and their unique “push” factors that have been identified.

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