

**KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF FAMILY MEDICINE DISCIPLINE
AMONG FINAL YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS AT MAKERERE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES.**

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ABSTRACT

Background: The early physician provided medical care that was able to meet the entire medical needs of his/her patients. After the publication of the Flexner report of 1910, the training and practice of medicine was oriented to biomedical sciences and specialization with a decline in general practice. The World Health Organisation has called for development of a primary health care system to address health inequalities and build sustainable health systems. In many countries, medical students are encouraged to specialize in Family Medicine in order to address the decline in general practice.

In Uganda, Family Medicine graduate training is done at Makerere University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. Makerere University College of Health Sciences has introduced Family Medicine in the undergraduate curriculum and also provided support for Family Medicine postgraduate training. The Ministry of Health has also supported postgraduate family medicine training. Despite all the effort, there has been persistently few applicants and therefore few family physicians have been trained.

Objectives

This study aimed to establish the knowledge and explore the perceptions of family medicine discipline among final year medical students and find out the proportion of final year medical students that would consider family medicine as a future career.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study that employed both quantitative and qualitative cross-sectional data collection methods. Data was collected using pre-tested self-administered questionnaires, entered into Epidata and exported to STATA 12.0 for analysis. Qualitative data was collected by focus group discussions with final year medical students.

Results: Seventy one (78.02%) of 91 respondents knew Family Medicine as a specialty, 67 (73.63%) reported that family physicians need specialized training and a large proportion of students knew the principles and core values of Family Medicine. Forty-six (45.05%) of students strongly disagreed that their exposure to Family Medicine was not adequate but few students would be satisfied as family physicians with only 3 (3.33%) of respondents stating they would consider Family Medicine as first career choice. Forty-seven (52.22%) of the students were not sure whether to choose Family Medicine as a future career.

Conclusion: Medical students knew Family Medicine as a medical specialty but had negative perception towards the discipline.