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Advisor/Mentor Role in Guiding Future Primary Care Physicians

November 11, 2009

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Background

- In 2006, Massachusetts health care reform law signed, thousands of people were added to the state's pool of medically insured, many looking for Primary Care Physicians (PCPs)
- Both state legislators and professional medical organizations¹ agree that the PCP shortage is at a "critical/severe" level²

¹Massachusetts Medical Society, Robert Graham Center, Several state legislators cited in McAuliffe, Michael (January 4, 2009).

²Since the time of this study there has been small increases in PCP and the critical level for some PCP specialties has been downgraded to a "Severe" level, with the exception of family medicine which still remains at a critical level. This according to the Sept. 2009 Massachusetts Medical Society Physician Workforce Study

Health Care Reform in Massachusetts

Selected results:

- 440,000 residents are newly insured¹
- > 97% of all MA residents are insured¹
- One study found adults now more likely to visit health care providers than before, but now finding difficulty identifying and accessing providers in a timely manner²
- In 2007, 1 in 5 adults in MA reported that a physician's office or clinic was not accepting new patients, and the majority (67%) of those reporting these problems were patients seeking primary care specialties²

¹Massachusetts Medical Society. Physician Workforce Study, 2009 Available at: www.massmed.org/workforce

²Long SK & Masi PB. Access and Affordability: An Update on Health Care Reform in MA, Fall 2008. Health Affairs 28, no. 4 (2009)

Current and Previous Research

- Graham Report¹: found several measurable factors that are related to students choice to pursue a residency in PC: *student related factors* (rural birth, student intent, marriage status, etc.), *institutional factors*, (public vs. private, exposure to Title VII funding, strength of family medicine department, etc.), and *curriculum factors* (family medicine exposure)
- Mixed results in studies exploring factors such as *student debt/specialty income difference* impact on students' choice of medical specialty^{1,2}

¹ The Robert Graham Center; Funded by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation (March 2, 2009). [Specialty and Geographic Distribution of the Physician Workforce: What Influences Medical Student and Resident Choices?](#) Washington, D.C.

² Harris, Scott. (December, 2008). Graduates Report Higher Debt, Primary care Interest. AAMC Reporter. Available at: www.ammc.org/newsroom/reporter/dec08/graduates.htm

UMMS Mission

One component of UMMS's mission is to provide affordable, high-quality medical education to state residents and to *increase the number of PCPs practicing in underserved areas of the state.*

Purpose

This study responds to our growing need to recruit future PCPs by investigating differences in relationships with advisors/mentors between those students who pursue a primary care residency and those who do not.

Primary Care as defined for this study

- Family Practice
- Internal Medicine
- Medicine/Pediatrics
- Pediatrics

Advisor/Mentor Match Process

- First year students fill out form indicating:
 - ❖ *characteristics of desired advisor*
 - ❖ *characteristics of the student (self)*
 - ❖ *expected specialty choice*
- Rank order each aspect by importance

Advisor/Mentor Relationship

- Advisors meet variably with students
- All advisors are volunteers
- 400+ students = approximately 300 advisors
- Advisors receive a training guideline packet

Method

- Exit survey data analyzed over a five year period (2004-2008, n=499)
- Primary Care(n=244) vs. other residencies(n=255)
- Four items measuring extent of use and satisfaction with advisor/mentor system

Analyses

- T-test with Bonferroni correction
- Proportions analysis using approximation of the binomial distribution (upper & lower ends of satisfaction scale collapsed)

Four Variables Measured

Satisfaction with:

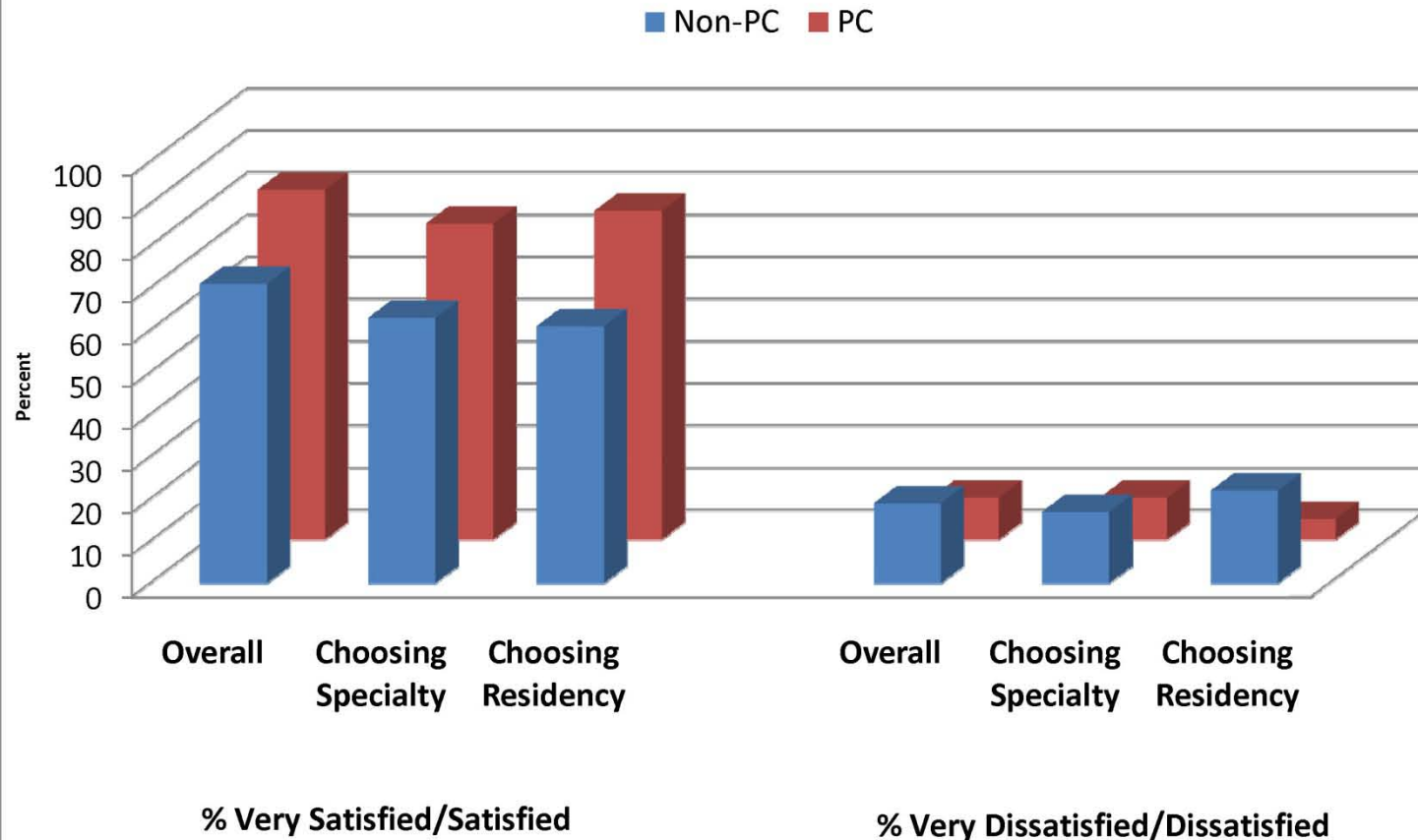
- *advisor/mentor system for overall guidance and assistance¹
- *advisor/mentor system for guidance and assistance in choosing a specialty¹
- *advisor/mentor system for guidance and assistance in choosing a residency program¹

Extent of use of the advisor/mentor system at UMMS²

¹ 5-point scale: Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, No Opinion, Satisfied, Very Satisfied

² 3-point scale: Not at All, To Some Extent, A Lot

Student Satisfaction with Advisor/Mentor System



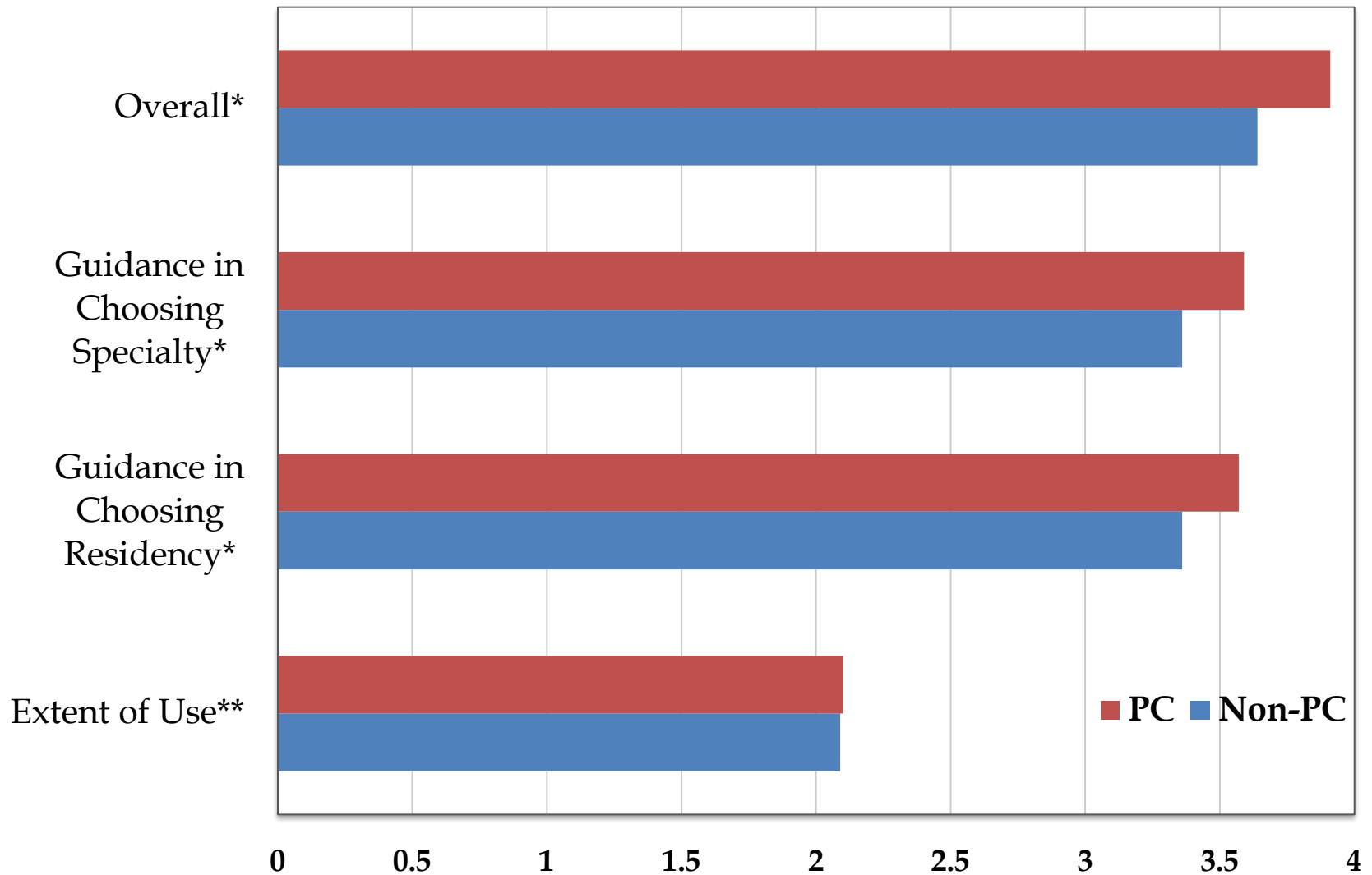
Proportions analysis: all statistically significant $p < .05$ level

Proportions Analysis¹

	% Very Satisfied or Satisfied		% Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied	
	PC	Non-PC	PC	Non-PC
Satisfaction level for <i>overall</i> guidance	83%	71%	10%	19%
Satisfaction for guidance in <i>choosing a specialty</i>	75%	63%	10%	17%
Satisfaction for guidance in <i>choosing a residency program</i>	78%	61%	5%	22%

¹ All statistically significant (p<.05)

Average Score of Use and Satisfaction with Advisor/Mentor System



*1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neither, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied **1=Not At All, 2=To Some

Average satisfaction levels with advisor/mentor system

	PC		Non-PC		Statistically significant (p<.05)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Satisfaction level for <i>overall</i> guidance	3.9	1.3	3.6	1.4	✓
Satisfaction for guidance in <i>choosing a specialty</i>	3.6	1.6	3.4	1.5	
Satisfaction for guidance in <i>choosing a residency program</i>	3.6	1.5	3.4	1.5	
Extent of use of advisor mentor system at UMMS	2.1	0.5	2.1	0.6	

Satisfaction Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=No Opinion, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied
 Extent of Use Scale: 1=Not at All, 2=To Some Extent, 3=A Lot

Discussion

- Approximately 90% of all students accessed their advisors/mentors with no statistically significant difference between groups
- While Non-PC students less satisfied than counterparts with overall guidance, majority (71%) indicated very satisfied/satisfied with overall experience
- Majority of both groups very satisfied/satisfied with advisors in choosing specialty, (PC=75%; Non-PC=63%), yet this was lowest rating for PC group, indicating potential for improvement
- The greatest disparity between the two groups was among satisfaction with guidance in *choosing a residency*

Conclusion

- Future PCPs more satisfied than counterparts with advisors/mentors role in guiding their medical career
- Direct causation remains unclear
- Faculty development should be explored to increase recruitment/retention of future PCPs
- Capitalize on relationship between students and advisors*

*This could build upon a recommendation from the Graham Report (2009), "Support primary care departments and residency programs and their roles in teaching and mentoring trainees."

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