Do high tuition fees affect the demographic of Medical and Dental students worldwide?

F H Mughal, R H Kassamali, Farazm@doctors.org.uk

Introduction

Tuition fees will be increased for those students’ entering into higher education within the UK in 2012. This topical and current issue prompted the undertaking of this project and literature search to explore factors that influence student decisions when considering entry into higher education and the potential impact of fees in Medical Schools on Global Health. There is strong evidence that Medical Schools that charge lower tuition fees are more likely to attract students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This approach promotes greater diversity in the profession and in the long term, makes a positive and strategically very important contribution to Global health.

Method

An anonymous, self completed questionnaire was designed to explore: 1. the financial background of the students’ 2. their views on how much tuition fee they would be willing to pay & 3. whether they would continue their current course in 2012.

Results

298 questionnaires were included for analysis. The response rate = 33.7%. 40.9% would not be willing to pay £6,000 each year for medicine or dentistry. 58.4% responded that they would.

63.1% of students’ were not willing to pay £9000 each year in comparison to 36.6% of students’ replying that they would.

Results to the question: “If you were starting your course in 2012, would you still have pursued your current course?” were that 69.1% responded “Yes” compared to 28.5% “No” responses. 53% of this group said they would have chosen a different course.

The results highlight a significant correlation between family income and students’ decision to continue their course in 2012. This gave a χ² value of 15.02 (P=0.00055).

Furthermore female students’ are more likely to quit their courses than their male colleagues, χ² = 4.53 (p=0.033).

Discussion

In the UK where the disparity between the rich and poor is becoming increasingly more evident, the rise in tuition fees will only serve to widen the gap; it does not help to bridge it. Developed countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Singapore have also identified this trend and the gap; it does not help to bridge it. Developed countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Singapore have also identified this trend and the issue is fast becoming a matter of international concern

Conclusion

The results show that there is potential for increased tuition fees to promote elitism in medicine and dentistry.

The introduction of higher tuition fees will have a disincentive effect on those applying for medicine and dentistry from lower and middle income groups. This is highlighted globally, as well as locally, as shown by our work conducted at the University of Birmingham Medical School.