IMPACT OF GLOBAL MEDICAL SERVICE TRIPS ON PHYSICIAN CAREERS OF MEDICAL STUDENTS OF HOST COUNTRY

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Abstract

Short term experiences in global health (STEGH) are common among high income country institutions visiting middle or low-income countries. Little information is known about the impact of STEGH to medical students of the host country. This study aims to identify the impact of global service trips on the host country's medical students' learning and career choices. The University of Florida (UF) College of Medicine hosts an annual, week long global service trip to different countries. For almost 20 years, UCNE (Universidad Catolica Nordestana) has partnered with UF DR Salud (University of Florida Dominican Republic Health) in a week-long service trip in the underserved communities of San Francisco de Macoris. Every year, 10-15 UCNE students in their senior year of medical school help the DR Salud team see patients in their community. An electronic survey was sent via email to previous DR Salud UCNE medical student participants. Out of 52 surveys sent, 31 responses were received. Five of the responses were incomplete, and only 26 were included in the analysis. The overall response of the host country's student participants regarding the influence of STEGH in their medical career is overwhelmingly positive. They all agreed that participating in STEGH improved their ability to perform physical examinations, reinforced their empathy to care for the poor and underserved, improved their ability in medical history taking and diagnostic skills, gave them confidence in procedural skills and medical decision making, and reinforced the reason why they wanted to be a physician. As far as the impact on their choice of medical career, a majority of respondents agreed that STEGH affected their choice of medical specialty.

Keywords: Global Health, Physician career, Medical students, Learning, Global Health Service Trips.