

# Factors associated with specialization intentions for paramedic practice

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Review of Related Literature: What factors are associated with specialization intentions for paramedic practice? Paramedic specialization is a recent growing venture for different interested health professionals (Wyatt, 2003). Paramedic specialization is however based on strong intentions from the paramedics and other interested individuals venturing into more specialized areas of the practice. The need to better understand and improve one's practice is based on the need to transition from novice to expert (Neary, 2000). Specialization choices for graduating medical students have a significant impact on the healthcare practice, and the motivations involved in decisions are not adequately understood. Various studies have been carried out in order to evaluate motivations involved in these specific specialties. Emergency medicine, as well as other medical specialisations is fields of practice which are considered more controllable in terms of work hours. As a result, medical students are opting less for careers in primary care and considering fields of specialisation. The rational choice theory can be used in order to explain the factors impacting on the choices people make (Walsh, 1996). Rationality is based on rational choice - sane or something considered in a clear-headed manner, weighing its benefits and burdens and making the decision based on logical thought processes (Walsh, 1996). Rational and practical choices relating to job capability, preference, and competitiveness would likely impact on the choices relating to specialisation intentions for paramedics. Paramedic practice has grown as one of the fields where specialisation has increased and positions in this field has also become competitive (Boyd, et. al., 2009). For which reason, specialisation intentions have increased. The implication for emergency practice is significant,

however not many studies have been carried out on the intentions and motivations of students choosing a career in emergency medicine (Boyd, et. al., 2009). Different elements are likely to factor into the decisions of students on paramedic specialisation. Gaps in research are mostly apparent in terms of factors affecting the decisions for medical students in considering a specialisation in emergency medicine (Boyd, et. al., 2009). Based on these considerations, this study seeks to answer the query: what are the factors associated with specialization intentions for paramedic practice. This study is being carried out in order to understand the specialisation intentions of various students seeking to enter into the various specific fields of paramedic practice. Various studies have varying claims on factors affecting specialisation intention. Gender seems to play a significant role in specialization intentions, with males choosing to specialize in certain areas of the paramedic practice and women choosing to specialize in other areas (Mahony, 2003). Male paramedics already outnumber female paramedics, hence, males statistically, are more likely to have a specialization intention in the paramedic practice (Mahony, 2003). Age can also be a factor in the specialization intention because those who are younger would more likely be enticed to participate in specialized fields of paramedics. Studies have also discussed how specialization intention in the paramedic practice has been based on skills considerations . Some paramedics have chosen to specialise in areas often associated with the environment where they are working. Some areas and environments still gain the assistance of physicians, nurses, and other technicians in the transport of patients, however, specialization in this field is now being entered into by the more senior and more experienced

paramedics (Pashen, et. al., 2007). In this case, the specialization intention is considered by those who are older and more experienced, most likely after they have reached the point in their career where they want to learn and master new skills and aspects of their practice. Age often impacts on specialisation intention in the paramedic practice in terms of the motivation it gives or does not give to the paramedics (Pashen, et. al., 2007). As was indicated above, specialization intention has been apparent for the more senior paramedics. For these senior paramedics, some of them may reach a point in their practice when they would want to grow, to take interest in other areas of their practice (Pashen, et. al., 2007). Taking interest in a more specific skill set is the necessary first step needed in specialisation. The actual training and specialisation often follows the intention to specialise. Gender also seems to impact on specialisation intent, with males more likely wanting to specialise in certain aspects of the paramedic practice (Adams, 2010). Studies indicate that males often seek the adventure attached to various specialisations, including those in the aviation paramedics, military rescues, oil platform rescues, as well as heavy search and rescues (Adams, 2010). For females, paramedic specialisation is less of an inclination, especially as many of the women entering health care often choose to work in hospitals as nurses or doctors (Adams, 2010). The specialization intention is therefore impacted by gender identities and gender qualities, fads, trends, and inclinations. References Adams, T., 2010. Gender and feminization in health care professions. *Sociology Compass*, 4(7), 454-465. Boyd, J., Clyne, B., Reinert, S., and Zink, B., 2009. Emergency medicine career choice: a profile of factors and influences from the Association of American Medical

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