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Postgraduate medical training and migration in Europe: a survey of financial and labour conditions

Comment Published: 28 August 2009

Volume 18, pages 53–57 (2010) Cite this article



Journal of Public Health

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Abstract

Background and introduction

Resident medical training following medical school is a period of great importance in the instruction and education of young physicians, but also the first step into the labour market for doctors. Unfortunately, the long educational curricula as well as the low economic remuneration render medical training attractive only in some European countries: often low salaries accompany endless weekly working hours with a wide range of differences among the European countries. The aim of this study was to analyse the different economic conditions for resident trainees by reporting the different salaries and the weekly burden of working hours, and also comparing the different costs of living in eight European countries and in Israel.

Materials and methods

A questionnaire was sent to resident medical doctors working in large university hospitals in eight European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the UK) and Israel, and data on the monthly salary, number of weekly working hours and general satisfaction were collected. Purchase power parity (PPP) in US dollar (USD) adjustment was calculated according to the latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) tables.

Results

Among the different countries, working hours per week ranged from 37 to 56. The net pay report had a median value of 2,000€ per month. The net monthly wage ranged between 1,000 and 3,000€. Power purchase parity in USD-corrected salaries varied from 1,388.80 (Greece) to 5,788.30 (UK), mean 2,562.30.

Conclusions

Taking into account PPP-adjusted wages, France, Greece and Italy are below the median continental values. The trend of migration of medical trainees to countries where the economic situation is more favourable seems reasonable. Because of both the high salary and the language, the UK represents the most attractive training destination.

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Conflict of interest

The authors disclose any relevant association that might pose a conflict of interest.

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Additional information

The data available were calculated on end of November 2008 thereby can’t take into account of any further change in national wages.

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Cite this article

Corea, F., Bacigaluppi, M. Postgraduate medical training and migration in Europe: a survey of financial and labour conditions. *J Public Health* **18**, 53–57 (2010). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-009-0281-6

Received	Accepted	Published
18 December 2008	02 June 2009	28 August 2009

Issue date
February 2010
DOI
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-009-0281-6

Keywords

Salary | Medical trainees | Survey

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