

## **Career outcomes and professional pathways of medical graduates: Evidence from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo**

J. A. I. Gunasekara<sup>1</sup>, C. Liyanage<sup>1</sup>, L. Wanninayake<sup>1</sup>, P. Yasawardene<sup>1</sup>, T. Perera<sup>1</sup>,  
W. A. G. Wickramasinghe<sup>1</sup>, A. de Abrew<sup>2</sup>, I. Karunathilaka<sup>2</sup>, P. Ranasinghe<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Pharmacology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

Sri Lanka has a well-established state-funded medical education system and universal healthcare services. However, recent economic challenges have accelerated the emigration of healthcare professionals. This study aimed to evaluate the long-term career trajectories, migration patterns, postgraduate training, and academic achievements of medical graduates from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo. A cross-sectional tracer study was conducted among graduates from five selected A/L entry cohorts (2001, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2015), representing different stages of career progression. Graduates were traced using batch contact lists, professional and social media networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp), and invited to participate via email or direct messaging. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered online questionnaire. Of 964 eligible graduates, 66.1% (n=637) responded; 51.5% were female. The proportion residing in Sri Lanka declined across cohorts, from 97.4% in AL2015 to 56.7% in AL2001, indicating increasing migration over time. The proportion of specialist consultants was highest in earlier cohorts: 43.9% (AL2001) and 34.9% (AL2005). Overall, 46.5% had completed or were pursuing postgraduate training, with Emergency Medicine (8.1%) and General Medicine (11.5%) being the most chosen specialties. A significant proportion of those migrated (57.6%) had done so after completing postgraduate training. The findings demonstrate a clear trend of late-career migration, particularly after specialization, alongside a strong preference for postgraduate training and specific specialties. These patterns highlight the need for policies aimed at improving retention of trained professionals within the national healthcare system.

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