

CURRENT CHALLENGES OF THE GYNECOLOGY ASSISTANTS IN TURKEY

Yusuf Taner KAFADAR¹, Funda GODE², Cansun DEMİR³, Ali BALOĞLU⁴

¹ Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Cukurova University, Faculty of Medicine, Adana Turkey

² Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Special Sada Hospital, Izmir, Turkey

³ Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Acıbadem Hospital, Adana, Turkey

⁴ Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Mustafa Kemal University, Faculty of Medicine, Hatay Turkey

SUMMARY

Objective: To assess the working conditions and current challenges of the gynecology assistants in Turkey and to propose solutions within this context.

Materials and methods: A survey on the problems of assistant doctors and the solution proposals they offered was executed with gynecology assistants who serve at the teaching, research and university hospitals in different regions of Turkey.

Results: 60 gynecology assistants from 7 training institutions (university and teaching research hospitals) were included in the study. 75% of the participants (n:45) preferred gynecology as their first choice in the medical specialty exam. 51% of the survey participants (n:31) were satisfied with their existing conditions. The main problem was determined as severe working conditions by 43% of the participants. (n:26) Based on the answers of 42% of the participants (n:25), malpractice was observed as the leading concern following the specialty. Furthermore, setting rules on duty hours and daily leave after duty as well as arranging working hours were the common opinion of assistant doctors with regard to the solution proposals to the working conditions. Additionally, issuing assistant report cards and boosting participation in conferences and scientific research activities were other prevailing opinions of the assistant doctors when it comes to reducing training problems.

Discussion: It is striking that under the current circumstances, assistant gynecologists are discontent with strenuous working environment and inadequate training. The common proposed solution is to initiate standardization in all training agencies across Turkey.

Key words: assistants, problems

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TÜRKİYE'DE KADIN DOĞUM ASİSTANLARININ GÜNCEL SORUNLARI

ÖZET

Amaç: Türkiye'de kadın doğum asistanlarının çalışma koşullarını ve güncel sorunlarını değerlendirmek ve bu konuda çözüm önerileri oluşturmak.

Gereç ve yöntemler: Türkiye'nin farklı bölgelerindeki eğitim araştırma ve üniversite hastanelerinde çalışmakta olan kadın doğum asistan hekimlerine, asistan hekimlerin sorunları ve çözüm önerileri hakkında bir anket düzenlendi ve sonrasında bu anketlerin sonuçları incelendi.

Sonuçlar: Toplamda 7 eğitim kurumundan (üniversite ve eğitim araştırma hastanesi) 60 kadın doğum asistanı çalışmaya dahil edildi. Çalışmaya katılan asistan hekimlerin %75'inin (n:45) TUS'ta ilk tercihi Kadın Doğum Bölümü idi.

Address for Correspondence: Yusuf Taner Kafadar. Çukurova Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi, Kadın Hastalıkları ve Doğum Anabilim Dalı, Adana
Phone: + 90 (506) 532 16 93

e-mail: yusuftanerkafadar@gmail.com

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Katılımcıların %51'i (n:31) şu an buldukları konumdan memnundular. Mevcut sorunlar arasında en temel sorunun ağır çalışma şartları %43 (n:26) olduğu saptandı. Uzmanlık sonrası en temel kaygının ise malpraktis %42 (n:25) olduğu gözlemlendi. Asistan hekimlerin çözüm önerilerine yönelik ortak görüşleri arasında çalışma koşulları ile ilgili olarak nöbet saatleri, nöbet ertesi izin ve çalışma saatlerine bir düzenleme getirilmesi; eğitim sorunlarına yönelik olarak da asistan karnesi düzenlenmesi, kongrelere katılımın ve bilimsel araştırmalara katılımın artırılması bulunmaktadır.

Tartışma: *Mevcut şartlarda kadın doğum asistan hekimlerinin ağır çalışma koşulları ve eğitim yetersizliği ile ilgili memnuniyetsizlikleri dikkat çekicidir. Çözüm önerilerine yönelik ortak görüş ise Türkiye genelinde tüm eğitim kurumlarında bu konuda standardizasyon çalışmalarının başlatılmasıdır.*

Anahtar kelimeler: *asistanlar, sorunlar*

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INTRODUCTION

European Network of Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynecology is an organization of the European Obstetrics Assistants and collaborates with the national representative organizations of obstetrics assistant doctors from all member states in Europe⁽¹⁾. In Turkey, an active obstetrics assistant organization is in place under name of ENTOG Türkiye. The main objectives of ENTOG is to improve the conditions of assistants, to enable the harmonization of education institutions across Europe and to mediate the participation of assistant doctors at different educational institutions in exchange programs⁽¹⁻³⁾.

Surveys regarding the problems of Obstetrics assistant doctors have been executed by ENTOG since 1997^(4,5). However, there exist no survey results in Turkey to our knowledge. Recently, both an increase in the awareness of the assistant doctors and unhappiness from current conditions are witnessed also through the press news.

The fact that the scores required for Obstetrics are falling down has been attracted to the attention of specialists and assistants currently and urges them to quest for solutions.

It is because of this reason why we wanted to make this research for the use of ENTOG Türkiye about the actual problems of the Obstetric Assistants in Turkey and to conclude with the recommendations.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Seven educational institutions participated in this work: Çukurova University, Dokuz Eylül University, Gazi University, Gaziantep University, Istanbul University,

Mustafa Kemal University, Antalya Education and Research Hospital. 60 assistants took part in the research. The questions used in the survey were prepared by the ENTOG Türkiye team. Survey consisted of 14 questions of which 3 were multiple choice and 11 were open question.

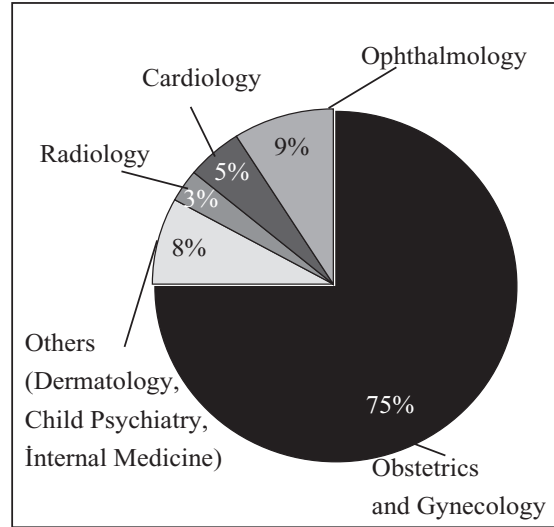
The questions were as follows:

1. What was your first choice at TUS?
2. What was the rank of Obstetrics?
3. What was the main reason of preferring obstetrics?
4. Are you content with your current status? (with the reason)
5. If you took the exam again, what would your first preference be?
6. If you took the exam again, would you prefer Obstetrics?
7. In your opinion, what is the basic problem during the assistantship period?
 - a. Material issues
 - b. Educational issues
 - c. Attitude of the faculty members
 - d. Heavy working conditions
 - e. Other (please explain)
8. Do you think the assistantship period as 4 years is sufficient?
9. Do you think you've had sufficient education?
10. What sources do you use for obtaining theoretical information? (magazine/article/book)
11. What is your level with regards to scientific work?
 - a. Nothing
 - b. Domestic poster
 - c. Domestic publication
 - d. International poster/publication
 - e. Magazine/book translationYour participation to congresses in Turkey or abroad?
12. How many duties do you have a month? In percentage, how much do you think your productivity falls following to duties?
13. In your opinion, what makes you most concerned about being a specialist?
 - a. Material issues
 - b. Malpractice
 - c. Mandatory service
 - d. Increase in responsibility and intensive working tempo
 - e. Other (please explain)
14. Things you would like to be improved and general suggestions? (Please write)

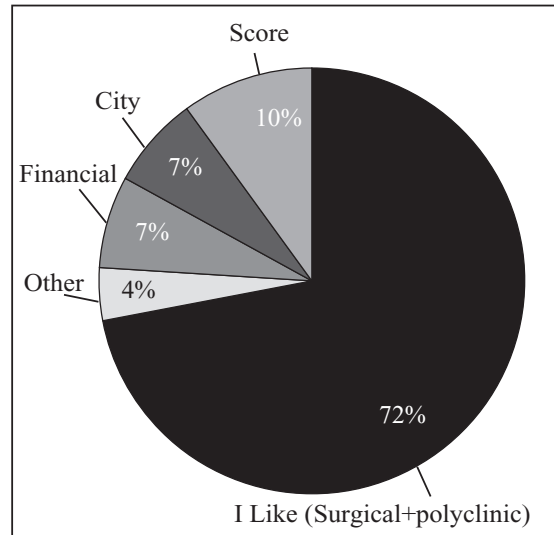
Each answer to the questions are calculated in percentages or number values and respective graphics are drawn.

RESULTS

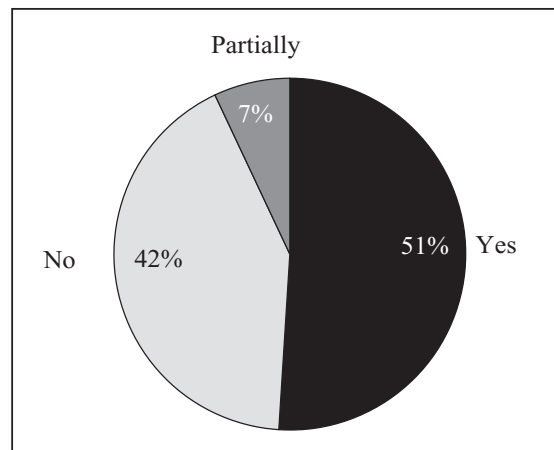
As the answers to the first question assessed, 75% (n:45) of the participants chose Obstetrics in their first preference at TUS. This is followed by 9% Ophthalmology, 5% Cardiology, 3% Radiology (Graph 1). When asked, the main reason why they preferred Obstetrics, 72% (n:43) answered because they liked this branch, 10% (n:6) because of scores, 7% (n:4) location, 7% (n:4) material, 4% (n:3) for other reasons (Graph 2). When asked to the participants whether they are content with their current status, it was determined that 51% was content, 42% unhappy and 7% was partially content (Graph 3). The answers of the participants to the question "If you take the exam again, what would your first preference be?" were in order 40% Obstetrics, 15% Radiology, 10% Dermatology, 10% Ophthalmology, 8% Psychiatry and 17% other branches (Graph 4). When asked the participants the basic problem during the assistantship period, 43% (n:26) replied the heavy working conditions, 23% (n:14) educational problems, 8% (n:5) the attitude of faculty members, 7% (n:4) material problems and the rest as "all" (Graph 5). It was determined that the assistantship period of 4 years was sufficient (Graph 6). It was also found out that 58% had no publications, 24% had domestic posters, 8% domestic publications, 5% international poster-publication, and 5% translation of book parts or magazines (Graph 7). Malpractice was the main concern of the assistants about being specialists (Graph 8). When asked the assistants about their productivity following to duties, all stated that their productivity decreased. Among the proposals of assistants to improve the working conditions were primarily, setting rules on duty hours and leave after duty as well as arranging working hours, preventing mobbing, increasing salaries and the number of assistants. With regards to the proposals for education were issuing assistantship (karne) to set up independent surveillance boards, bringing up standardization, convening regular meetings, enhancing the participation in congresses and incentives for scientific research.



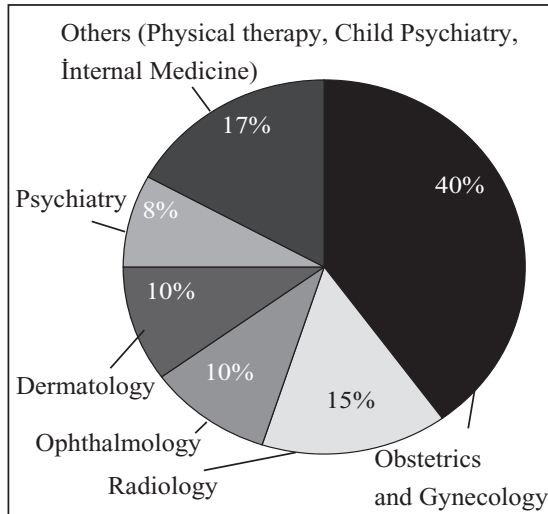
Graphic 1: What was your first choice at the speciality exam?



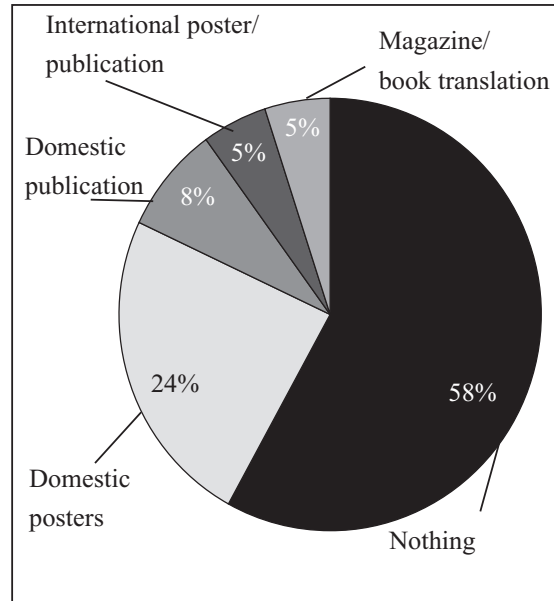
Graphic 2: What was the main reason of preferring obstetrics and gynecology?



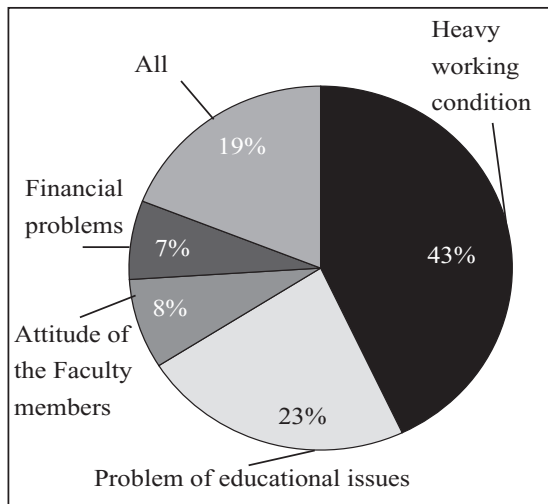
Graphic 3: Are you content with your current status? (with the reason)



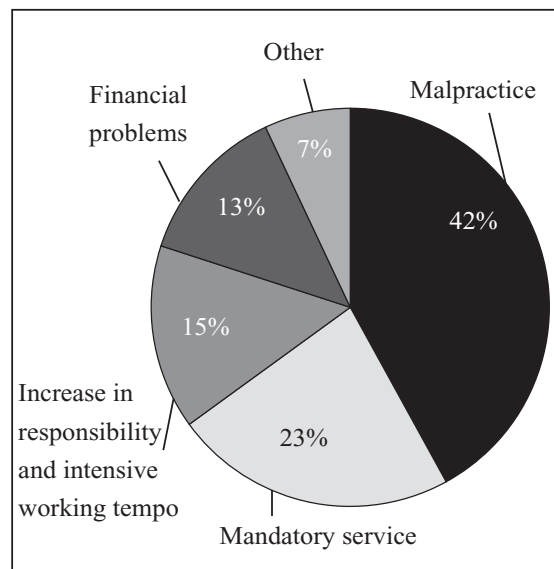
Graphic 4: If you take the exam again, what would your first preference be?



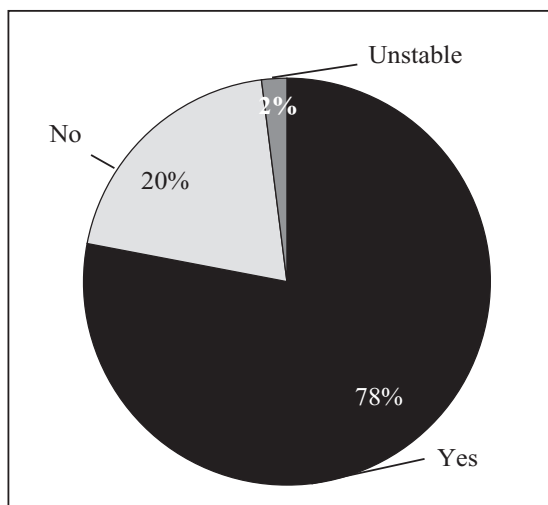
Graphic 7: What is your level with regards to scientific work?



Graphic 5: In your opinion, what is the basic problem during the assistantship period?



Graphic 8: In your opinion, what makes you most concerned about being a specialist?



Graphic 6: Do you think the assistantship period as 4 years is sufficient?

DISCUSSION

ENTOG has been working on improving the conditions of assistants since it was established and executed the first survey in 1997. In this regard, we, as the representatives of Obstetric Assistants in Turkey, applied this survey in order to assess the current situation of the assistants and propose solutions to their problems.

Recently, the awareness of assistant doctors has been increased both on working and educational conditions. The process that started with assistant protests continued

with convening the assistant congress and creating a branch for assistants in the medical chamber.

Having assessed the survey results, we came to the conclusion that the leading issue was the heavy working conditions and lack of education. It is particularly obvious that amendments to duty frequencies and day after leave are imperative. The difference of working hours of obstetrics assistants between education institutions is another issue.

Another conclusion that attracts our attention in the survey was that 75% of assistants preferred Obstetrics as their first choice but 40% would have preferred so if they had to sit in the exam today. The reasons of the current situation can be counted as the working conditions, future concerns, malpractice and lack of education.

It was observed that the most concerning issue was malpractice. The fear of malpractice derives from current legal arrangements and lack of education. The proficiency of assistantship education in Turkey deviates from an educational institution to another and even assistants in the same institution receive different education. There is unfortunately no standardization in many institutions. European Board College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (EBCOG) inspects the education institutions in Europe upon their demand and those approved get accredited. Accredited clinics are then assessed periodically. In Turkey there are 9 accredited clinics currently. Presence of assistantship (karne) is a great advantage to enable standardization and sufficiency of their education. Proliferation of assistant (karne) in Turkey is crucial in line with the

objectives of ENTOG.

In conclusion, determination in cancellation of the practice of alternate day duty should also be shown in having a daily leave after the duty. In order to enable Obstetrics to regain its deserved status and to make it preferred by highest score holders at TUS exam, better observation of doctors' rights and improving the acquisitions in return of the risks in the future Malpractice Law should be provided.

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