

Study compares experiences of general, fellowship-trained pediatricians

from the AAP Department of Research



A program of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Deciding on a career path can be challenging for residents, including whether to pursue fellowship training. New AAP research shows that pediatricians are satisfied with their career and overall life, regardless of whether they pursue a subspecialty or practice general pediatrics (Byrne BJ, et al. *Pediatrics*. 2015;136:672-679, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/136/4/672>).

Studies have identified characteristics of residents who are more likely to choose fellowships and factors that might contribute to their decision, but little is known about what life is like after fellowship.

To fill this knowledge gap, researchers used data from the AAP Pediatrician Life and Career Experience Study (PLACES), which tracks the job paths and lives of early career pediatricians.

Results from pediatricians who are eight to 10 years post-residency highlighted differences in learning characteristics, work environment and work-life balance between pediatricians who pursued a subspecialty (fellowship-trained pediatricians) and those who did not (general pediatricians).

More than one-third (39%) of early career pediatricians pursued a subspecialty. They were more likely than general pediatricians to be male (47% vs. 32%) and white, non-Hispanic (66% vs. 60%).

In addition, fellowship-trained pediatricians were more likely than general pediatricians to communicate routinely with colleagues and have work that provides adequate opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills (see Figure 1). They also were more likely to report an annual income of \$150,000 or higher (67% vs. 53%).

General pediatricians were more likely than fellowship-trained pediatricians to work less than 50 hours per week, practice in a suburban area and

spend their time in direct patient care (see Figure 1). They also were more likely to report having schedules that allowed flexibility to lead a balanced life and be satisfied with time spent with their own children.

Among all early career pediatricians, the majority were satisfied with their residency training, their current work and their life as a whole (see Figure 2).

“There is little information available to residents contemplating fellowship training, particularly on



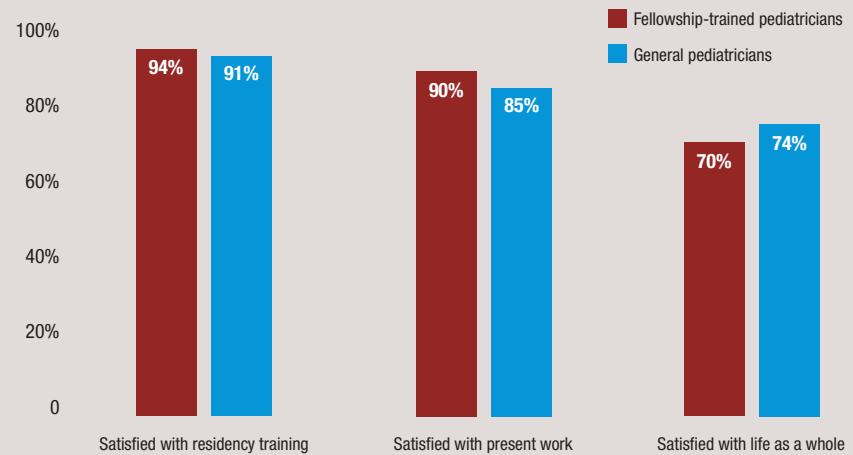
Dr. Byrne

Figure 1
Characteristics of early career pediatricians (n=840)

Learning characteristics	<p>Fellowship-trained are <i>more</i> likely than general pediatricians to report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routinely communicating with colleagues to gain new knowledge and skills (96% vs. 85%) • work that allows adequate opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills (84% vs. 75%)
Work environment	<p>General pediatricians are <i>more</i> likely than fellowship-trained to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work less than 50 hours per week (77% vs. 39%) • work in suburban areas (51% vs. 18%) • spend time in direct patient care (mean 88% of time vs. 68%)
Work-life balance	<p>Fellowship-trained are <i>less</i> likely than general pediatricians to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a flexible schedule (54% vs. 64%) • be satisfied with the amount of time to spend with their own children (47% vs. 59%)

Source: AAP PLACES, Annual Survey 1 (2012). Data are weighted to adjust for differences between PLACES pediatricians and the target sample of pediatricians.

Figure 2
Satisfaction of early career pediatricians (n=840)



Source: AAP PLACES, Annual Survey 1 (2012). Data are weighted to adjust for differences between PLACES pediatricians and the target sample of pediatricians.

what happens in their work and life after fellowship,” said Bobbi J. Byrne, M.D., FAAP, lead author of the study and chair of the PLACES project advisory committee. “I think program directors and mentors will find our data valuable as they counsel residents pertaining to career choices. Also, residents should be reassured that with either choice, they are very likely to be happy with their work as a pediatrician and their life in general.”

RESOURCE

For more information on PLACES, visit www2.aap.org/research/places.htm or contact Mary Pat Frintner, in the AAP Division of Health Services Research, at 800-433-9016, ext. 7664, or mfrintner@aap.org.