

## Employment prospects for holders of GMU's bachelor's degree in biomedical sciences or master's degrees in medical specialties

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To ascertain the employment opportunities that are likely to become available to graduates of a:

- i. Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical Sciences, and
- ii. Master's Degree in selected medical and clinical specialties.

**Materials and Methods:** Personnel in Human Resources divisions and Hospital Administrators in hospitals, clinics and health centers in Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah responded to a structured questionnaire that an assistant handed over to an identified staff member in the respective divisions. Opinions were sought on the employment opportunities as regards the Bachelor's in Biomedical Sciences (4 years' duration), and the Masters programs in Human Reproductive Biology (2 years' duration) and in Clinical Sciences (3 years' duration) in the specialties of Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Diagnostic Imaging and Anesthesiology. Eighty seven questionnaires were available for analysis. The respondents' perceived assessment of the current/expected employment opportunities available to the graduates were tallied under *Low, Considerable, High* and *Very High* categories.

**Results:** The perceived opportunities for employment are considered satisfactory by the Human Resources administrators of the healthcare facilities. At least 85% of the respondents rated the prospects as being considerable or higher for each program, with Pediatrics and Obstetrics & Gynecology receiving higher assessments any of the other specialties.

**Conclusion:** All programs were perceived to offer good employment opportunities, with those in Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Diagnostic Imaging and Biomedical Sciences being likely to have much higher prospects than the others.

**Key words:** employment prospects, bachelor's degree in biomedical sciences, master's degrees in medical and clinical specialties

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### INTRODUCTION

The academic leadership of several medical schools across the GCC countries provides an outline of undergraduate medical education in the six GCC countries<sup>1</sup> with its report pointing out that there are limited opportunities for residents after graduation, with residency training not being well developed in the UAE and the future not being very clear for non-national students. It is also felt important to make available postgraduate programs in the country itself or at least with the region especially for female candidates who are enrolling in higher education in large numbers<sup>2</sup>.

Gulf Medical University (GMU) has ventured into postgraduate education

in the medical specialties by offering three Master's level programs. The need to expand these endeavors with the introduction of formal and structured postgraduate training opportunities in other medical specialties has been felt by the educational administration of GMU and has been pointed out many prospective students as well.

Some of the main areas that had been identified are Human Reproductive Biology, and the clinical aspects in the specialties of Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Diagnostic Imaging and Anesthesiology. In addition Bachelor's level program in Biomedical Sciences surfaced as a program that

would benefit students who may not be inclined to pursue a career in Medicine but wished to seek employment in health-related fields.

This study was undertaken to ascertain the perceptions of administrators in Human Resources divisions of hospitals, clinics and other health facilities in the UAE regarding the employment opportunities that are likely to become available to graduates of seven new program that GMU wishes to offer. More specifically, the respondents were asked to indicate their opinions on the potential employment opportunities for students completing a

- i. Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical Sciences, or
- ii. Clinical Master's Degree in Anesthesiology, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Diagnostic Imaging, Internal Medicine or Human Reproductive Biology.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Personnel in Human Resources divisions and Hospital Administrators in hospitals, clinics and health centers in Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah responded to a structured questionnaire that an assistant handed over to an identified staff member in the respective divisions. Opinions were sought on the employment opportunities

as regards the Bachelor's in Biomedical Sciences (4 years' duration), and the Masters programs in Human Reproductive Biology (2 years' duration) and in Clinical Sciences (3 years' duration) in the specialties of Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Diagnostic Imaging and Anesthesiology.

Eighty seven questionnaires were available for analysis. The data were tallied under *Low*, *Considerable*, *High* and *Very High* as regards the respondents' perceived assessment of the current/expected employment opportunities available to the graduates.

### RESULTS

The Master of Clinical Sciences in Pediatrics and Master of Clinical Sciences in Obstetrics & Gynecology programs were felt as offering very satisfactory employment opportunities. All respondents indicated that the former was associated with considerable, high or very high employment prospects while all respondents except one held the same view regarding the Clinical Masters program in Obstetrics & Gynecology. Twenty respondents (23%) indicated that the Clinical Master's program in Anesthesiology offered low employment opportunities while 10 (11%) held a similar view as regards the Clinical Master's program in Human Reproductive Biology. Details appear in Table 1.

Table 1. Human Resources administrators' perceptions on employment opportunities likely to be available to Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences and Clinical Master's degree holders

Program	Employment Opportunities			
	Low	Considerable	High	Very High
Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences	2	45	37	2
Master of Clinical Sciences in Anesthesiology	20	35	22	7
Master of Clinical Sciences in Obstetrics & Gynecology	1	26	34	22
Master of Clinical Sciences in Pediatrics	-	23	33	29
Master of Clinical Sciences in Diagnostic Imaging	6	30	38	10
Master of Clinical Sciences in Internal Medicine	-	27	33	25
Masters in Human Reproductive Biology	10	36	31	8

## DISCUSSION

The GCC nations have accepted that they needed to authorize and expand private higher education institutions to meet the educational needs of their respective communities. The past few years have witnessed the establishment of private universities in many of the member states of the GCC. While some of these institutions are funded by local investors, others have been joint ventures or branch campuses affiliated to established universities abroad.

The lack of opportunities for graduates of health sciences to pursue graduate education in their parent institutions or in the region is a major problem that they face. Additionally the UNESCO Global Education Digest Report has pointed out that around 177,000 students from the Arab States migrate worldwide to pursue their higher education<sup>3</sup>. Thus, Gulf Medical University felt imperative that it developed graduate programs for Medicine and Allied Health graduates completing their training in the UAE and other GCC countries.

The findings of our study complement the widely held view that establishing new postgraduate programs in the health sciences, especially in selected specialties in the medical fields, is a necessity in the GCC countries. The proposed programs are an appropriate response that would meet the felt needs of graduates of medical and other health-related programs while also catering to the healthcare needs of the community and creating additional avenues for employment.

## CONCLUSION

All programs were perceived to offer good employment opportunities, with those in Internal Medicine, Obstetrics

& Gynecology, Pediatrics, Diagnostic Imaging and Biomedical Sciences being likely to have much higher prospects than the others. A brief conclusion of the study should be included in this section.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

All the programs proposed are viewed by prospective employers as likely to offer to satisfactory employment opportunities. The highest interest appears to be in the fields of Pediatrics and Obstetrics & Gynecology. GMU may introduce the seven programs under consideration and they are bound to attract suitably qualified candidates.

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