



Results of an international, online-based survey

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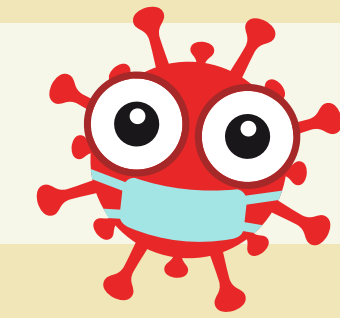
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In collaboration with:



Background

There is an increasing need for Tropical Medicine training across Europe. Only a subset of countries in the WHO European Region offer Tropical Medicine specializations or sub-specializations*. To our knowledge, there has neither been a comprehensive structured analysis of the university curriculum nor postgraduate training concerning Tropical Medicine in the European region. As a first step to contribute to the discussion on revision and harmonization of training schemes, and to identify opportunities for improving education and training in Tropical Medicine, FESTMIH and the European Medical Students' Association jointly circulated a survey among medical students and doctors in the WHO European Region to evaluate the current and desired state of the subject.

*As of August 2021: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom

Objective

To identify and analyse gaps in Tropical Medicine education and training in the WHO European Region for medical students and postgraduate doctors.

Methodology

An online survey of 22 questions (open-ended, Likert scale and multiple choice) was circulated to medical students and doctors in Europe between April and June 2021. Significance tests and a thematic analysis of the data were conducted.

A scoping review of Tropical Medicine specialisations in the European region was also performed, by contacting experts known to FESTMIH and EMSA, and reviewing up-to-date peer-reviewed and grey literature.

Respondents

Baseline data:

500 of 510 responses were included in the study. There were 285 students and 215 doctors from 27 countries that participated. There were 80 different universities represented by the student respondents and 100 by the doctors.



Number of students, doctors, and universities represented by the survey responses.

Results

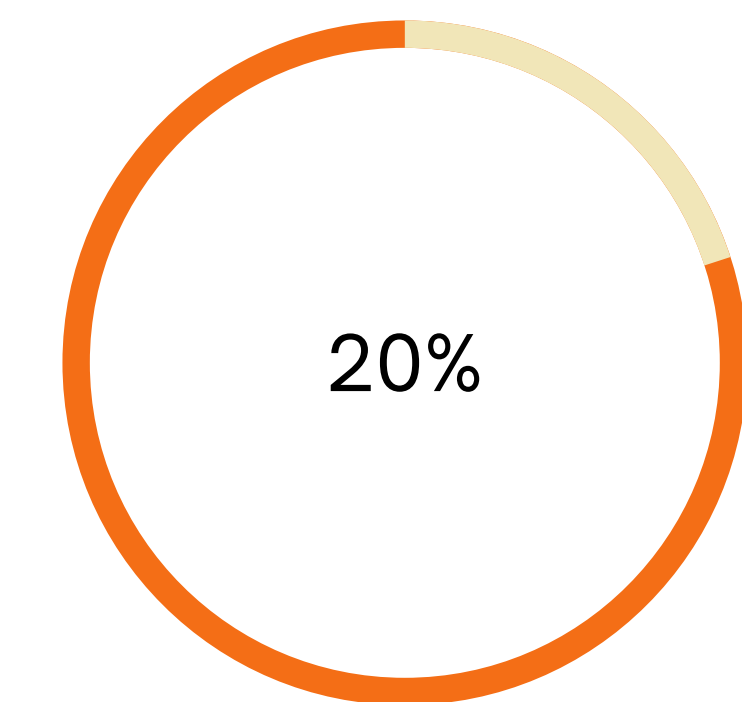


Fig 1. 20% of students and 10.7% of doctors said they were unsure whether they had been taught Tropical Medicine during university

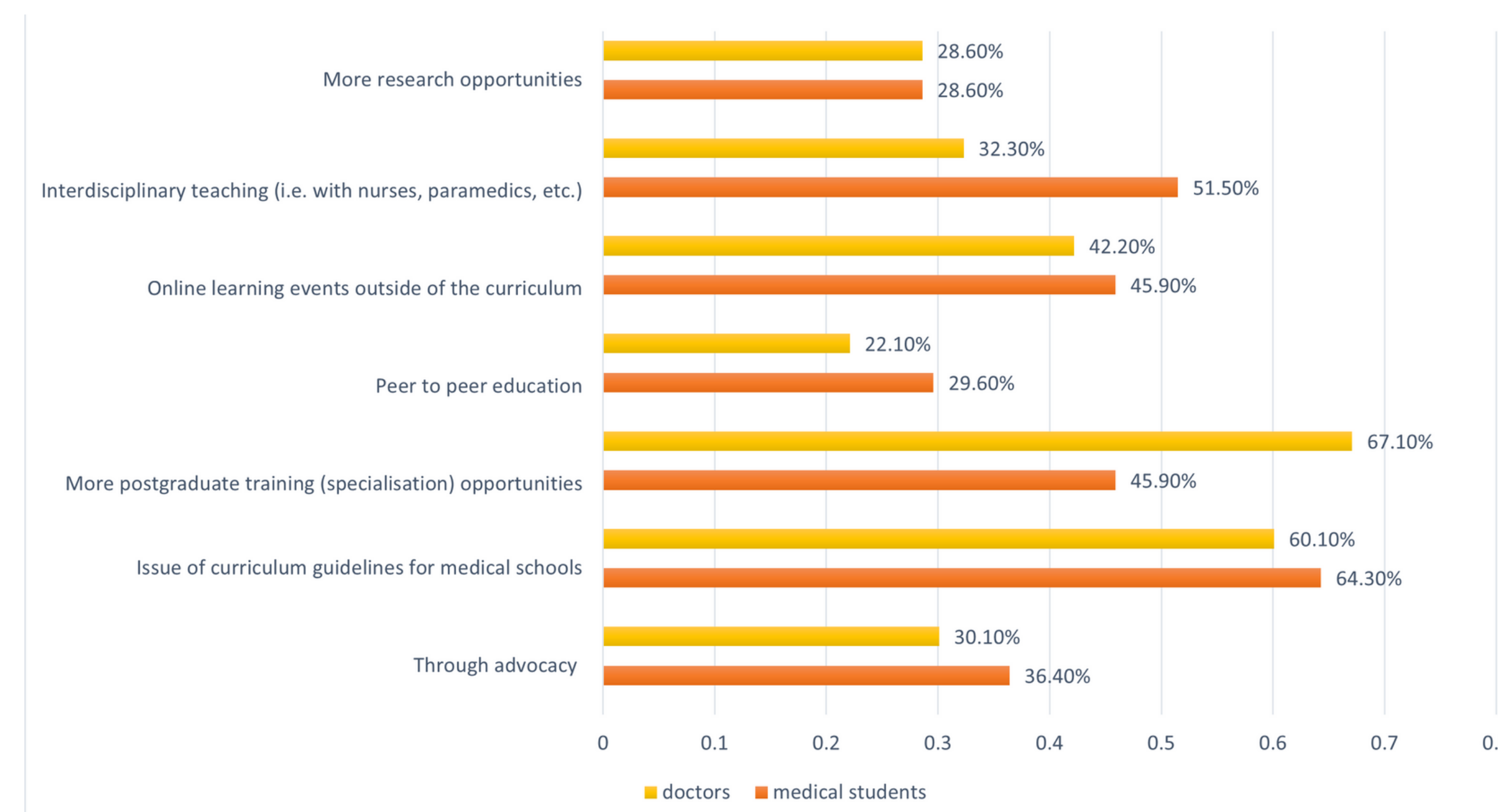


Fig 2. How do you believe Tropical medicine education could be improved and expanded in the European Region (check all that apply)

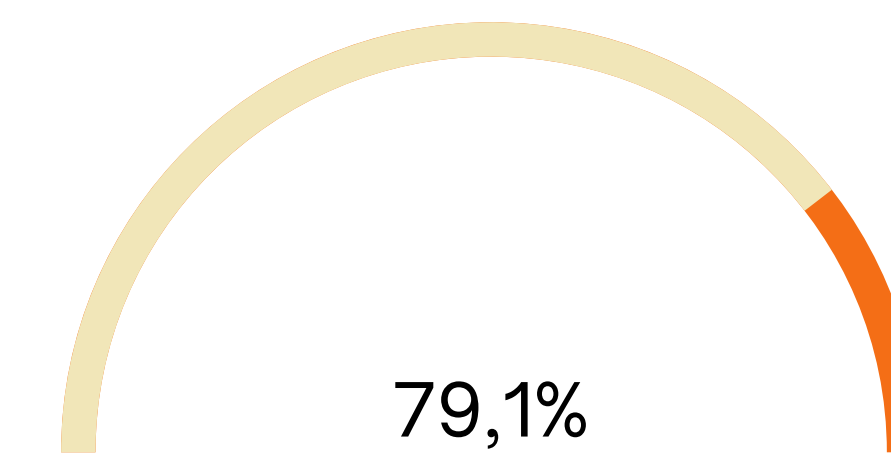


Fig 3. 79.1% of doctors stated that the amount of Tropical Medicine training they encountered was or had been "not enough".

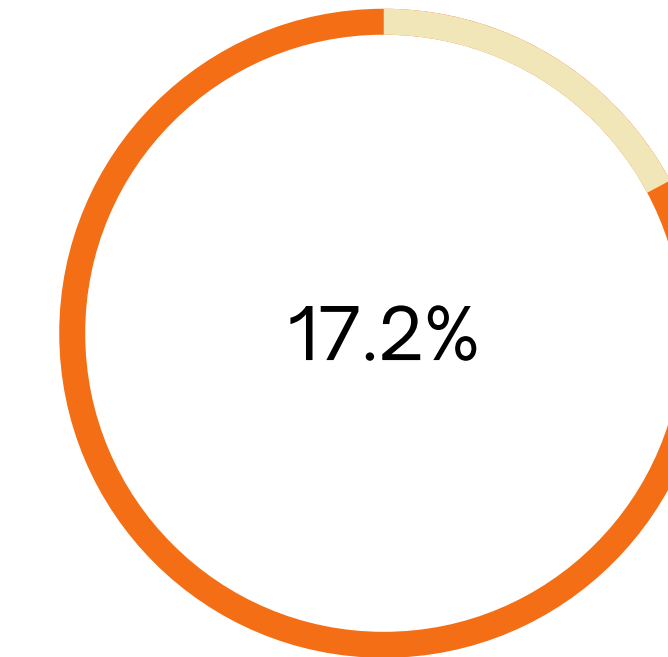


Fig 4. 17.2% of doctors were unsure whether postgraduate training in Tropical Medicine was available in their country



Discussion

The survey found that most of the Tropical Medicine curriculum offered at medical faculties is taught via other disciplines, such as ID or Public Health, and is frequently non-compulsory. Interest in a discipline can also be generated through university scholarship and funding opportunities in that discipline; thus, we believe a lack of these opportunities could be contributing to the discipline being neglected or not considered as a real career option.



Conclusion

Respondents demonstrated great interest in Tropical Medicine. Their self-reported knowledge, awareness, and perceived competence were partly dependent on whether there is specific teaching accessible at the university. Postgraduate training options were available in some countries but not all respondents were aware of these. There is a pressing need for harmonized curricula and expanded postgraduate training to improve Tropical Medicine competencies across Europe, particularly amidst global shifts in epidemiology of infectious disease, migration, climate change, and antimicrobial resistance, which require specialised training.

Read the full text here:

