Survey of CMF Graduate Members about International Work in Resource-poor Settings

Summary

An on-line survey was sent to the 3,358 graduate members with whom we are in email contact in May 2010, to learn about members’ involvement in medical mission and international work – past, present and future. 1,121 members responded and there was an encouraging level of interest - 50% of the respondents said that they are considering the possibility of international work in the future.

230 respondents have served long term in the past in 48 countries around the world, 74% with a mission or church organization. 459 have made short term visits (<6 months) to 98 countries, most commonly to train and teach. 77 respondents are currently working abroad long term in 36 different countries, Africa being the commonest continent. 125 respondents are actively planning long term international work in the future and 202 are planning short term trips.

296 respondents are involved in international work in other ways than going overseas, including working for international organisations based in UK and serving on boards and committees. 595 respondents volunteered to support members currently working overseas by giving advice, updates, appraisals or visits.

Results

Most questions were not mandatory so percentages are taken from the number who answered each individual question

Survey sent to 3,358 members
Total started survey 1,121
Total completed survey 1,053
Response rate 33%

Respondents

21% junior doctors
55% career grade
24% retired (see fig 1)

All specialties were represented, with general practice the commonest, reflecting CMF’s membership (see fig 2)
Interest and Involvement in International work

Interest in international work

'Actively planning' service long or short term
149 (15%)

'Considering possibility' of future service
358 (35%)

'Not thinking of working abroad' 492 (50%)

Answers to other questions revealed that a number of those ‘actively planning’ do not have concrete plans but good intentions. However, the figures show that half the respondents have an interest in working abroad (see fig 3)

The junior doctors were the most interested group:
78% of the juniors expressed interest in working overseas
52% career grade are interested
22% retired are interested

The junior doctors also had the highest proportion of those ‘actively planning’ to work overseas long term (see fig 4)
24% of the juniors are ‘actively planning’ long term service
12% career grade doctors are ‘actively planning’ long term service
5% retired doctors are ‘actively planning’ long term service

Career grade and retired doctors were more likely to be planning short term service (see fig 4)
20% of the juniors are ‘actively planning’ short term service
23% career grade doctors are ‘actively planning’ short term service
15% retired doctors planning are ‘actively planning’ short term service
Involvement in International Work

77 respondents are currently overseas
230 respondents have served long term in the past
459 have served short term in the past

125 are planning long term service in the future
202 are planning short term service in the future

296 are involved in another capacity (eg working in UK for international agencies, serving on boards and committees, supporting projects and individuals)

68 are in contact with a CMF in another country (30 different countries from all continents)

125 have been to an ICMDA conference

Fig. 5 Numbers of Members involved in international work past, present and future

Long term service

230 respondents have served long term in the past
125 are planning long term service in the future

70% of those planning long term work have been on a short term trip in the past
Type of setting/organisation
Mission or church organisations were the commonest context for long term service in the past, present and future. Other settings included secular NGOs, government institutions, universities and teaching hospitals and research units.

A higher proportion of respondents are planning to go with secular NGOs and to university posts than in the past (see fig 6)

Specialty
The numbers of long-termers from different specialties was similar in the past, present and future (see fig 7)
Commonest medical specialties were palliative care and infectious diseases, commonest surgical specialties were ophthalmology and orthopaedics.

Country of service
Respondents have served in 48 countries around the world, from every continent. Africa is by far the commonest continent (see fig 8)
Short term service

459 have served short term in the past
202 are planning short term service in the future
167 respondents are doing regular visits

Purpose of visit
Teaching and training is the commonest purpose of short term visits. Other visits are done to provide a specialist service or a locum for a long-termer. A small number of respondents are involved in hospital links (see fig 9)
Other respondents also mentioned visits to friends/mission partners, non-medical trips and student camps

Specialty
The spread of specialties can be seen in fig 10. Those providing a specialist service were most commonly surgeons or ophthalmologists.

Continent
98 countries around the world have received short term visits from CMF members. Africa was the commonest continent (fig 11)
Helping overseas members

595 respondents are willing to help in at least one of the following ways, and many in more than one;

Receive alerts of needs (346)
Be a ‘buddy’ for an overseas member (250)
Give appraisals (150)
Email advice (310)
Short term placement for overseas members (121)

Other ways respondents offered to help:
Talking/mentoring those thinking of going
Teaching/research/examining overseas- lots of interest in Prime
Teaching on courses in UK
Advice re publishing papers
Prayer
Finance
Hosting / practical / pastoral help for those on leave
Supporting International students / CMF / ICMDA

Interest in an on-line forum

396 respondents indicated that they would like to join an on-line forum for health professionals interested in medical mission and international work Doctors from all age groups were interested (fig 12)