

Exploring Coping Self-Efficacy and Calling in Medical Students Studying Medicine Across Two Continents

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Introduction

One clinical site for the University of Queensland (UQ) medical program, is the Ochsner Clinical School with a cohort of American students who will practice medicine in the United States. This particular international cohort has additional academic requirements including high stakes examinations and a highly competitive system for residency to cope with alongside the UQ MD degree. Faced with these additional constraints and commitments, we hypothesized that the Ochsner cohort would have higher levels of coping self-efficacy and calling to medicine compared to their Australian and International classmates.

Methods

A quantitative cross-sectional study used a survey to collect data from the first-year cohort in 2019. Demographic information and measures of coping self-efficacy and calling to medicine were included. Multivariate analysis was performed to compare groups.

Table 1. Student Group Demographics

	Domestic Students n (%)	Ochsner Students n (%)	International Students n (%)	Total n (%)
Gender				
Male	164 (66)	33 (41)	49 (59)	246 (60)
Female	83 (34)	47 (59)	34 (41)	164 (40)
Total	247	80	83	410
Age				
< 25	213 (86)	53 (66)	60 (72)	326 (80)
≥ 26	34 (14)	27 (34)	23 (28)	84 (20)
Total	247	80	83	410

References

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- Galarneau D, Seoane L, Eley DS. Personality, Resilience, and Calling in Students Undertaking a Medical Degree Across Two Continents: Disparate Pathways to the Healing Profession. *Ochsner J*. 2021;21(2):143-151. doi:10.31486/obj.20.0029

Table 2. Comparison of Traits by Student Group

Trait	Student Group	n	Mean +/- SD	95% CI for Mean	P value
Calling	Domestic	247	3.61 +/- 1.10	3.47-3.75	0.000
	Ochsner	80	4.41 +/- 0.72	4.25-4.57	
	International	83	4.04 +/- 0.74	3.89-4.20	
	Total	410	3.85 +/- 1.02	3.75-3.95	
Coping Self-Efficacy	Domestic	247	15.65 +/- 2.76	15.31-15.99	0.013
	Ochsner	80	16.47 +/- 2.46	15.93-17.02	
	International	83	16.42 +/- 2.55	15.87-16.98	
	Total	410	15.97 +/- 2.68	15.71-16.23	

Table 3. Comparison of Traits in Ochsner Students vs. All Others

Trait	Student Group	n	Mean +/- SD	95% CI for Mean Difference	P value
Calling	Ochsner	80	4.41 +/- 0.72	-1.28 to -0.03	0.000
	All Others	330	3.72 +/- 1.04		
Coping Self-Efficacy	Ochsner	80	16.47 +/- 2.46	-0.93 to -0.44	0.046
	All Others	330	15.84 +/- 2.72		

Results

426 students responded to the questionnaire (247 Domestic, 80 Ochsner, and 83 International Students). Ochsner students scored significantly higher on measures of coping self-efficacy and calling to medicine out of the three groups.

Discussion

The results indicate that Ochsner students have levels of traits that are well suited for the rigorous demands of their program. Given the differences between the three cohorts in their requirements and commitments as part of their MD degree, a stronger level of calling may suggest a greater understanding of their motivation for pursuing medicine, while higher levels of coping self-efficacy may suggest confidence in overcoming challenges to achieve their goals. These findings may partially account for their ability to succeed in the program despite the added pressures they face.