

»» BACKGROUND

PRE-HOSPITAL EMERGENCY MEDICINE [PHEM] is a sub-specialty of **anaesthesia, emergency medicine and intensive care medicine**.

The GMC recognised PHEM as a sub-specialty in July **2011**. Subsequently, PHEM has rapidly evolved, becoming integral to patient care across the UK.¹

A recent study demonstrated **under-representation of women in UK helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS)** [20% of doctors and 24% of paramedics].² Understanding medical student's perspective and attitudes towards PHEM is vital to foster interest and address any real or perceived barriers in PHEM.

»» METHODS



This study explored current **UK medical student perspectives, motivations, and perceived barriers** relating to PHEM as a career. An **anonymous online survey** was disseminated by the **Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care Student and Trainee Group** via social media and contact with university societies. The survey explored **exposure to PHEM, motivational and deterrent factors, and gender-specific perceptions**.

»» RESULTS

SURVEY: 92 responses

Encompassing **22 medical schools** covering every region within the UK. The majority of respondents were aged **17-24** and **98%** had heard of **PHEM**, with **66%** expressing interest in pursuing it within their career.



PHEM exposure as a medical student:

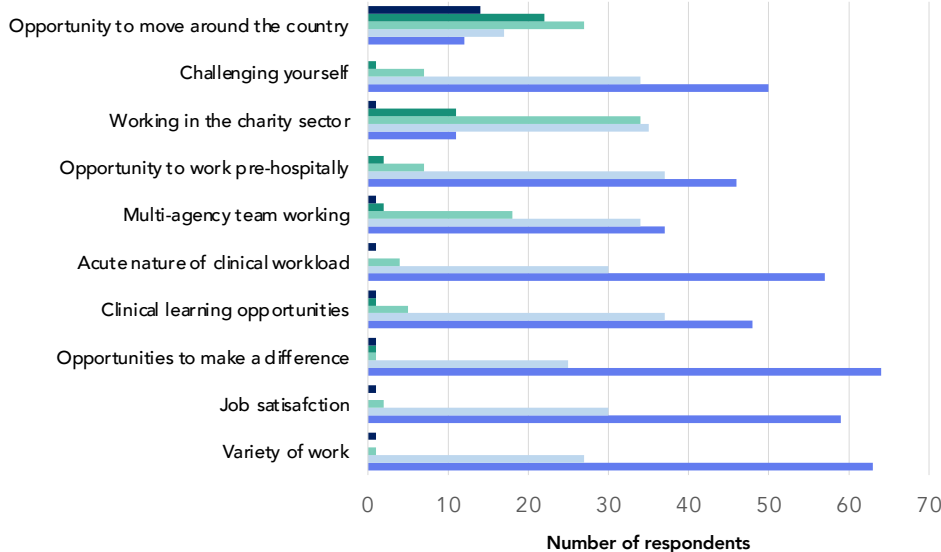
lectures [49%], simulation [45%], Community First Responder schemes [37%] and observer shifts [28%]

KEY MOTIVATORS for considering a **career in PHEM** were defined as those rated important or extremely important. These included:

- **Variety of work** [98%]
- **Job satisfaction** [97%]
- **Making a difference** [97%]



A CAREER IN PHEM: MOTIVATING FACTORS



■ Very unimportant ■ Unimportant ■ Neither important nor unimportant ■ Important ■ Extremely important

GENDER-SPECIFIC PERCEPTIONS:

82% believed women face additional challenges, primarily due to **gender stereotypes** [62%], **lack of role models** [46%], and **work-life balance** [43%]. More women than men cited strain on **family and personal life** as a deterrent [83% vs. 62%], while more men compared to women highlighted **difficulty gaining exposure** [73% vs. 58%]

BARRIERS TO PURSUING

A CAREER IN PHEM were identified by 79%, including: **Limited exposure** [66%], **logistical challenges** [49%], and **lack of information** [37%]

DETERRENTS

identified were strain on **family and personal life** [73%] and **perceived difficulty accessing relevant experience** [65%]. Free text comments frequently mentioned **low availability of jobs** and **subsequent high competition ratios**, with additional references to mentorship and mental health.

»» CONCLUSION

Strong interest in PHEM persists among UK medical students despite concerns around **limited exposure** and **work-life balance**. Continuing to address **accessibility and gender equity** by using strategies such as **mentorship programs and exposure to role models** will attract a broader range of talent and help support the development of a diverse **PHEM workforce** that is representative of the community it serves.

REFERENCES:

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2. Thomas-Mourne J. Exploring the gender gap in UK helicopter emergency medical services. Journal of Paramedic Practice. [Internet] 2024. [cited 2025 October 25]; 16(11). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.12968/jpar.2024.003>

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