

„New vision for primary health care and sustainable development“

Timing matters: family medicine exposure in Latvian undergraduate medical education

Ieva Griķe¹, Arita Kohva¹, Matīss Kore¹, Cindy Lisa Heaster¹, Michael Frank Harris¹, Dins Šmits¹, Ilze Grope¹

¹Rīga Stradiņš University, Rīga, Latvia

Introduction

What Do We Know About Timing of Specialty Choice?

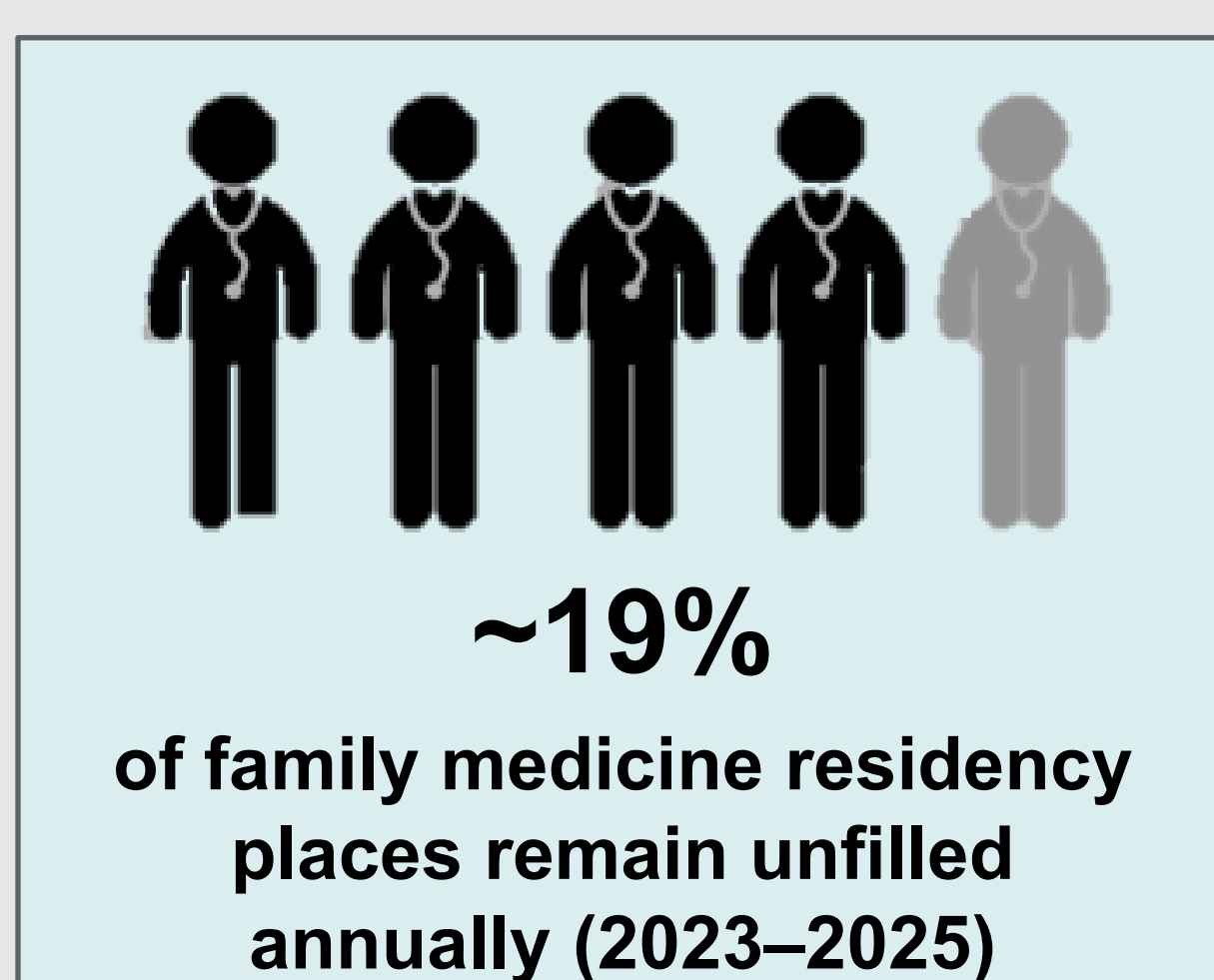
- ✓ Evidence shows that specialty preferences begin forming during early clinical years and become more stable over time.
- ✓ Students are more likely to choose specialties they:
 - encounter earlier in training.
 - experience for a longer duration.

Why does this thesis matter in Latvia?

Mismatch between national healthcare needs and medical student trajectories.

Latvia is facing growing shortage of family doctors, but students are not choosing this specialty.

62%
of practicing family doctors are aged 55+



Aim

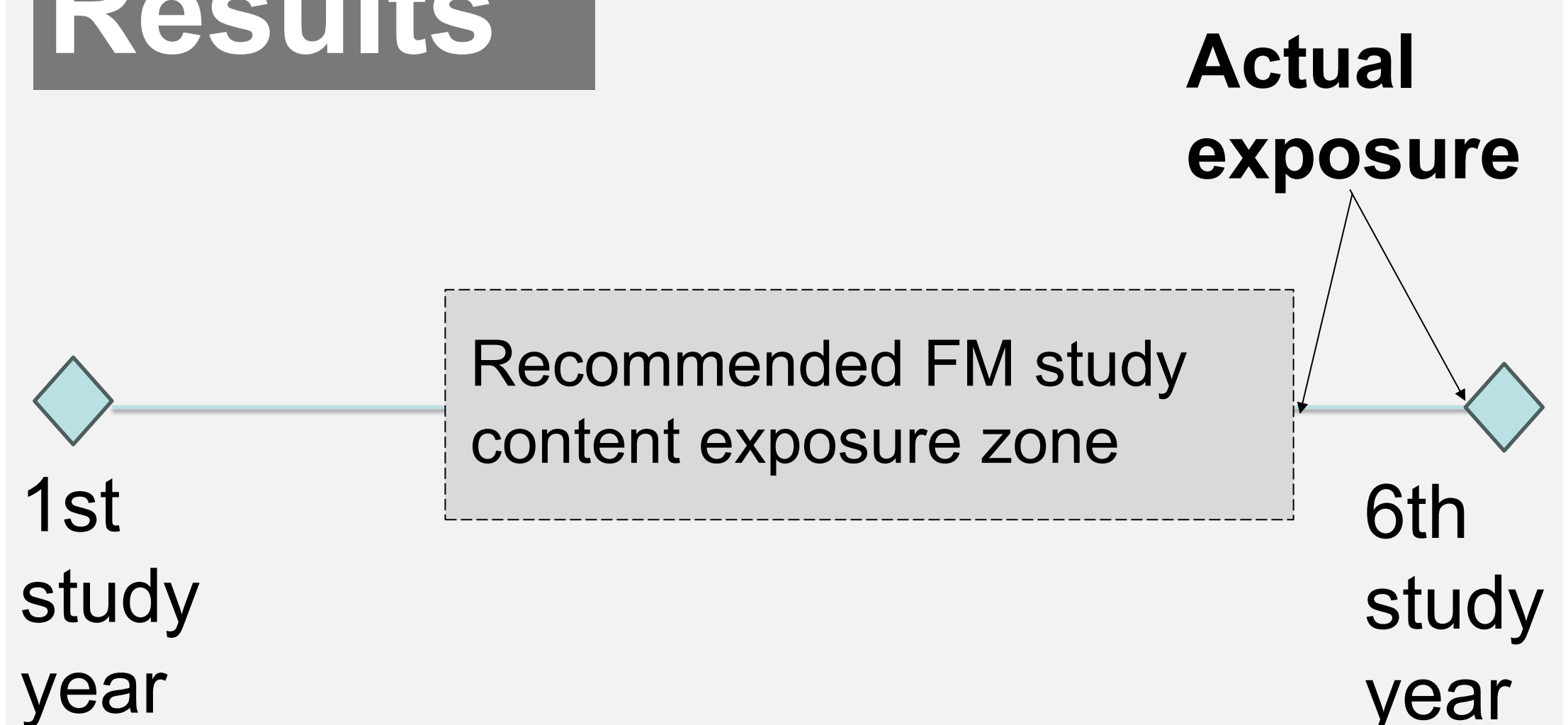
To examine timing and extent of exposure to family medicine in Latvian undergraduate medical education curricula.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews with curriculum coordinators at Rīga Stradiņš university (RSU) and University of Latvia (LU).

Focus: timing and structure of family medicine exposure.

Results



- Clinical studies begin in Year 3 at both universities.
- Structured exposure to family medicine appears:
 - In the 5th year at Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU).
 - In the 6th year at the University of Latvia (LU).
- Both universities require a 2-week mandatory clinical practice in family medicine during the 6th year.
- Elective opportunities:
 - RSU offers a limited-choice elective in family medicine (6th year).
 - LU offers no elective FM courses.
- Early engagement with family medicine is:
 - Minimal.
 - Not systematically promoted.

In Latvia, structured exposure to family medicine begins only in the final years of medical school, which may limit students' familiarity with the specialty amid a growing need for new family doctors.

Project Nr. VPP-VM-Sabiedrības_Veselība-2024/1-0002 "Enhancing General Practitioner Resilience in Latvia: Challenges and Solutions"

