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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE APPEAL OF DERMATOLOGY AMONG MOROCCAN MEDICAL STUDENTS, INTERNS, AND GRADUATES

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Abstract

Choosing a specialty is a crucial decision for medical students and graduates. Dermatology stands out for its growing appeal to medical students. The aim of our study is to investigate the attractiveness of dermatology as a specialty among Moroccan medical students, laureates and interns, and to analyze the factors that may be associated with it.

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Introduction:-

Dermatology is a medical specialty in which the simple clinical examination, sometimes supplemented by the analysis of a skin biopsy, enables more than 90% of diagnoses to be made. This highly varied specialty ranges from paediatrics to geriatrics, from cosmetology to oncology, from internal medicine to genetics.

In the era of biotherapies for inflammatory and allergic diseases, or targeted therapies and immunotherapy for cancer, the world of dermatology is undergoing a revolution.

The choice of specialty is a crucial decision for future specialists. Dermatology stands out because of its growing appeal to medical students and graduates.

The aim of our study is to investigate the attractiveness of dermatology as a specialty for Moroccan students, graduates and medical interns, and the factors that may contribute to this.

Materials and Procedures:-

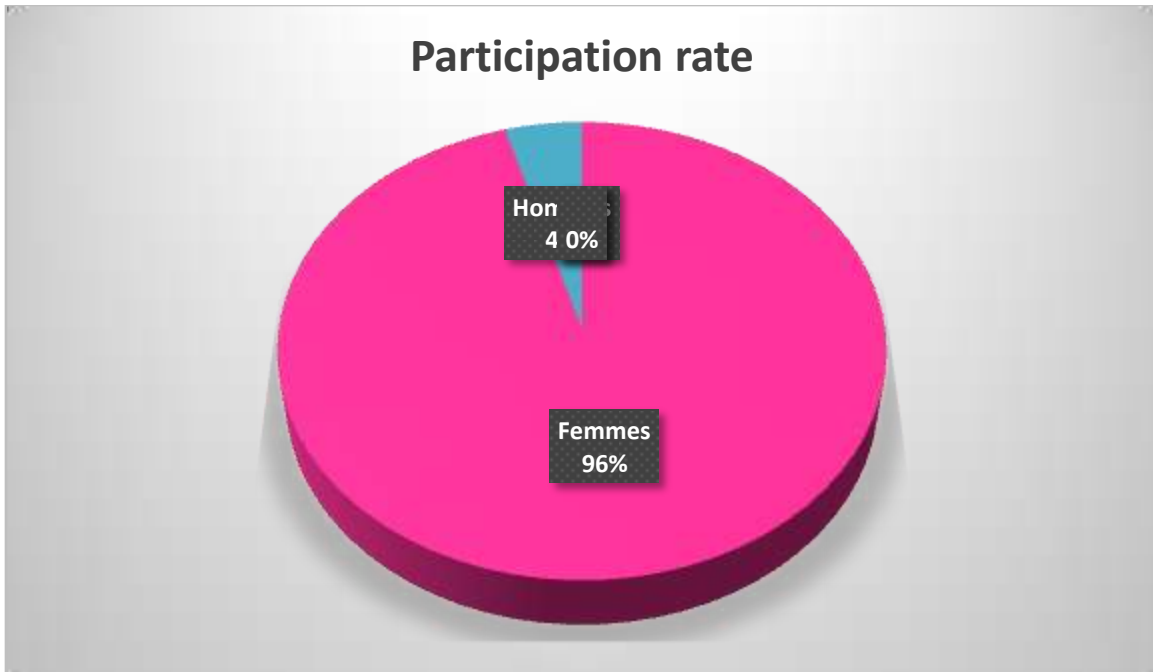
This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in June 2023. Our study included medical students who had started their hospital rotations (third, fourth, fifth, and sixth year), as well as interns and graduates from Moroccan medical faculties.

A Google Forms-based questionnaire was developed that covered three areas: anonymous sociodemographic characteristics, information about the clinical exposure level to dermatology, and attitudes toward dermatology as a specialty. The study's data were extracted into a Microsoft Excel table, and then statistical software called JAMOVI was used to analyze the data.

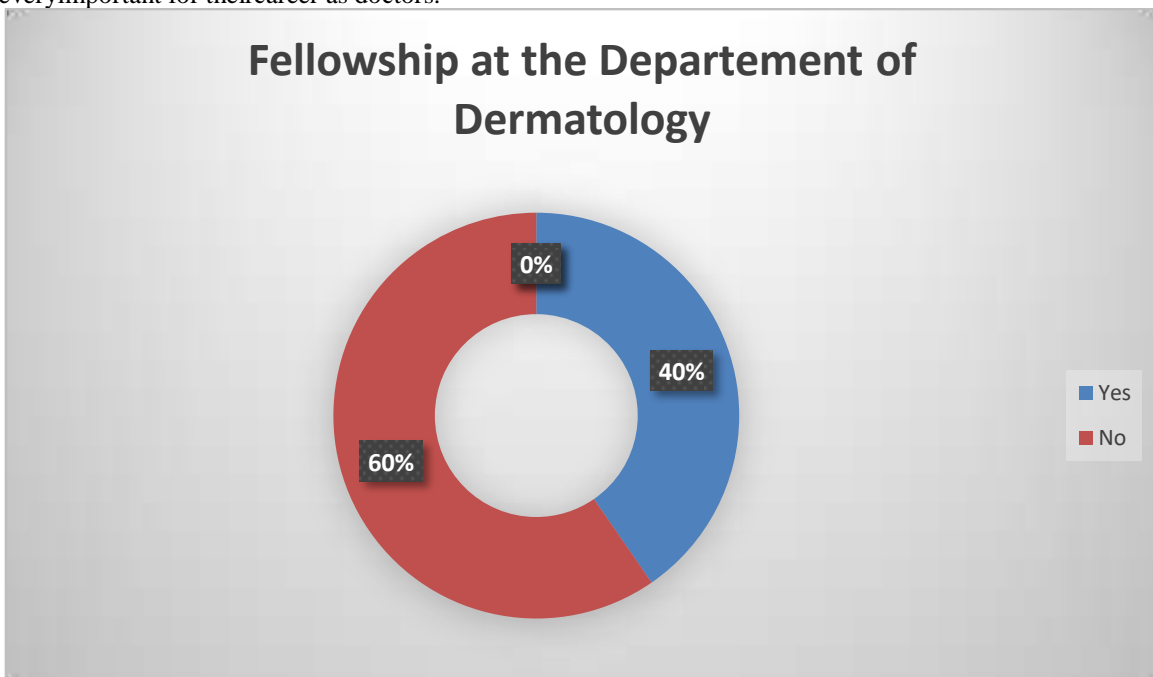
Results:-

A total of 478 responses were received. The majority of participants were medical students with a response rate of 60% compared with 39.9% including interns and laureates, with a clear predominance of women estimated at 68.2%

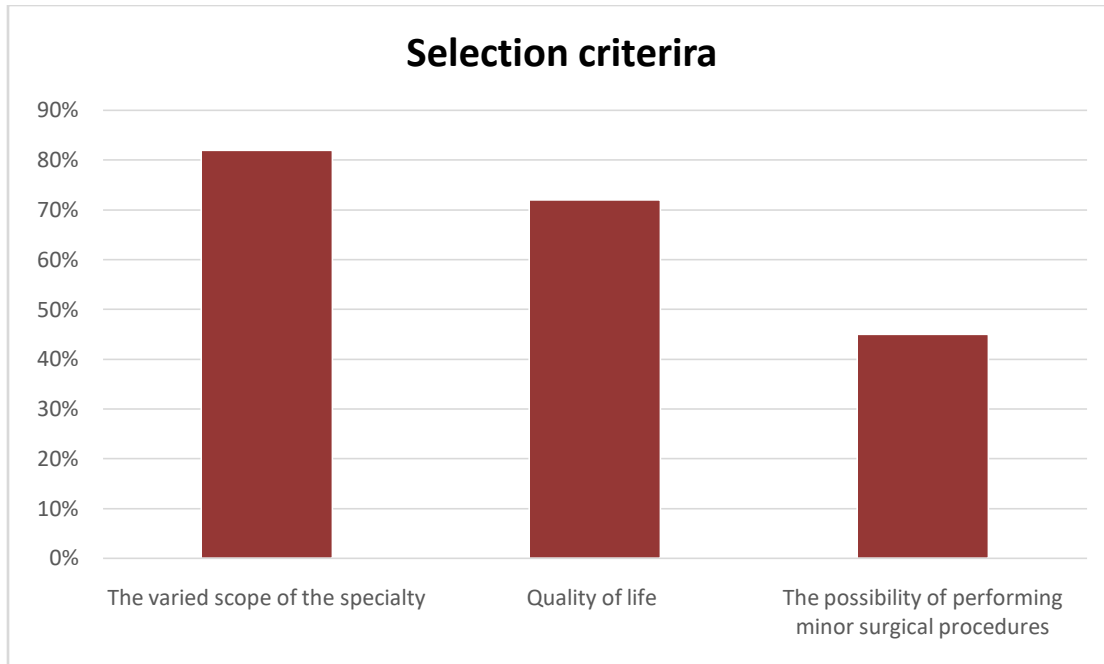
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59.62% had not visited the dermatology department during their clerkship. 67.15% considered a spell in dermatology to be very important for their career as doctors.



The richness and variety of the speciality, the quality of life during the residency and on completion of the speciality, the cold nature of dermatology and profitability were the factors motivating the choice of the speciality for future specialists. 43.93% considered dermatology as one of the specialties they planned to choose as a career specialty. The most valued argument was the diversified nature of the speciality (81.58%), followed by the balance between personal and professional life (71.95%) and the possibility of performing minor surgical procedures (45.3%).



Discussion:-

Dermatology is considered a fascinating discipline by Moroccan medical students and graduates. Clinical exposure to dermatology, or a hospital placement in a dermatology department, are the strongest predictors of the choice of dermatology as a future career by medical students.

Our study showed that the trend towards feminisation of the speciality is continuing, with 68.2% of our survey sample being female. For example, 63.3% of those enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Marrakech for the 2016-2017 academic year were women¹. Another hypothesis explaining this phenomenon of feminisation is the increased interest of women in the strong relational component with patients, as well as their close follow-up in consultation conferred by medical specialities such as dermatology².

In our survey, quality of life during and at the end of the training course was the most important criterion influencing the choice of dermatology, for 71.95% of participants. In fact, dermatology is a cold speciality. It is not much in demand in emergency departments and deals with chronic pathologies, with less involvement in medico-legal matters. These conditions of practice are more conducive to a balance between professional and personal life. A systematic review conducted by Levailant et al in 2020 identified work/life balance as the most influential factor in the choice of a student's specialty, followed by interest in the subject, academic training and the diversity of the discipline³. Another result concerns future dermatologists' interest in self-employment.

In fact, 83% of participants expressed an interest in working in the private sector as a mode of practice at the end of their training. A survey carried out on the criteria for choosing a speciality among interns at the Mohamed VI University Hospital of Marrakech's Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy shows that the choice of the liberal sector is motivated by the freedom to set up practice in a given area, the escape from the less attractive conditions of the public sector and the profitability of the liberal sector.

With regard to the residency positions offered for the dermatology speciality, for the year 2022, 05 residency positions have been opened for all the faculties of medicine and pharmacy for a total of 881 positions during the same year, which represents 0.56%. This is not enough to make up for the shortfall in the number of practitioners in Morocco, and access to dermatology training can be an obstacle for some candidates.

For a population estimated at 37 million, the ratio is 7.8 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants, whereas the World Health Organisation (WHO) standard is 15.3 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants. The Ministry of Health's new health map shows a crucial shortage of specialist doctors in the public sector. The new health map from the Ministry of Health shows

that there is a crucial shortage of specialist doctors in the public sector, and reveal that by 2022 the public medical corps will only have 1,093 specialists, including 256 dermatologists. The shortage of human resources will be exacerbated by the flight of skills and massive immigration in the form of a veritable "exodus" of freshly qualified doctors to other countries. According to a study carried out by AK Sylla et al. on 251 students in their final year of training at the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Casablanca, 2/3 of the participants were considering leaving the country in search of better training, better working conditions and a better quality of life⁴. The aim of the current reform of medical studies is to broaden the base of new entrants to medical faculties and to shorten the length of studies by one year. The aim is to triple the number of medical graduates to 45 health professionals per 10,000 inhabitants by 2035⁵.

Conclusion:-

The appeal of dermatology to medical students, interns and graduates of medical schools can be explained by several factors. The diversity of dermatological pathologies offers future dermatologists a wealth of clinical experience and a variety of cases to diagnose and treat. In addition, dermatology is often perceived as a speciality that enables ongoing relationships to be established with patients, which can contribute to greater professional satisfaction. Research opportunities in dermatology are also seen as an attractive factor, offering students the chance to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this constantly evolving field. However, it should be noted that certain challenges can also influence the choice of medical students, as the competitiveness of dermatology training can be a barrier for some applicants.

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