Hepatopancreaticobiliary Surgery Fellowship Selection Process: the Impact of Being a DO Candidate

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Background

Bias against Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) in the field of surgery has been documented.[1] DO candidates have lower rate of acceptance to General Surgery Residency Training programs when compared to a Doctor of Medicine (MD) candidates with similar USMLE scores.

HPB fellowship is very competitive fellowship with ~33% reported match rates.[3] However, there has not been any study exploring the impact of being a DO for the field of Hepatopancreaticobiliary (HPB) Surgery.

Methods

Survey was sent out to 52 faculty members and programs directors involved in HPB fellowship candidate selection. It consisted of cases where respondents had to pick a preferred candidate between on 2 abridged, fictional HPB fellow applications and give an open-ended response as to why they picked that candidate. The applications were nearly identical with one notable characteristic of interest such as candidate's medical background (MD or DO). Faculty members were then asked to input their demographic information, followed by open-ended questions asking for their most desired traits when selecting a fellow. Program directors additionally provided demographic information of their past 5 fellows.
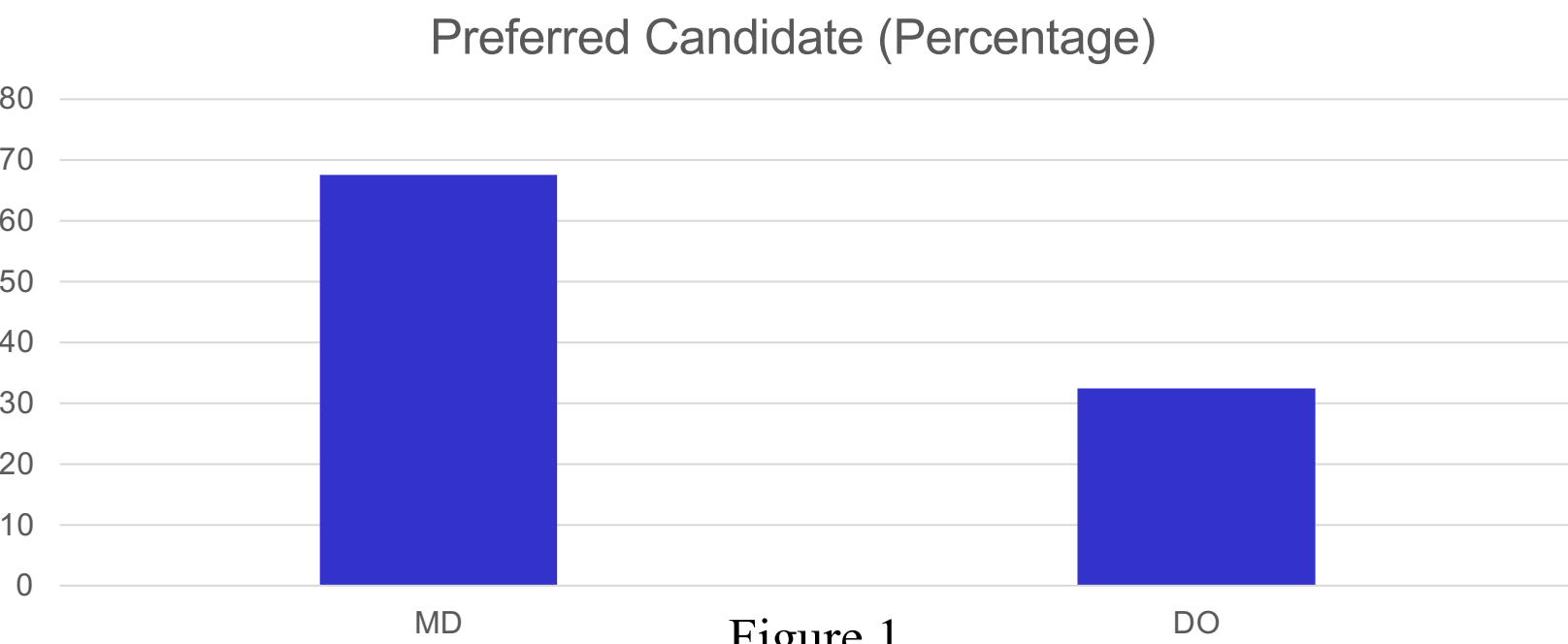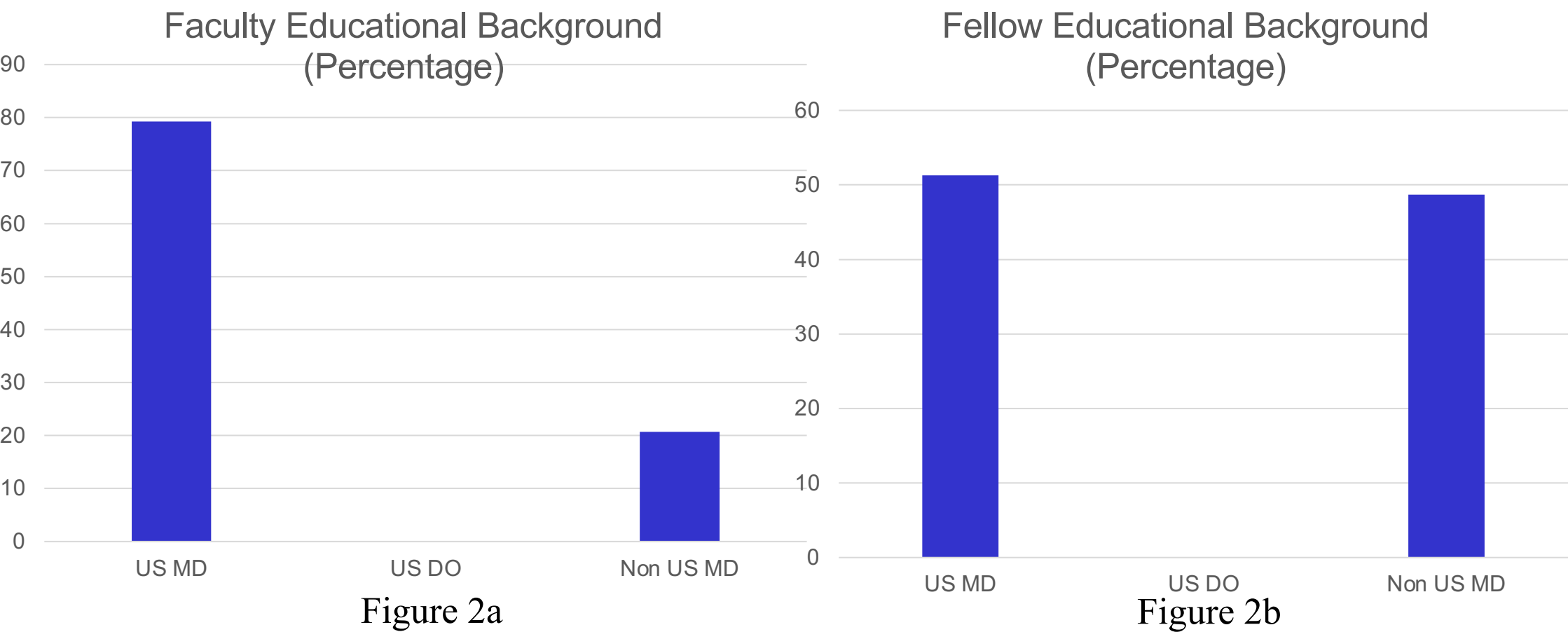
Results

Figure 1

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

Table 1: Selection Factors/Keywords Mentioned	Mentions (n)
Motivation/Dedication/Passion/Work Ethic	14
Collegiality/Professionalism	10
Academic Curiosity/Productivity	7
Technical Skill	6
Grit/Resilience	4
Malleability/Easy to teach	3
Competence/Reliability	3
Intelligence	3
Personality	2
Leadership	2
Teaching skills	1
American/Canadian Trained	1
Previous Fellowship	1
MIS/Robotic Experience	1
ABSITE Scores	1

Figure 1. Percentages of responder who preferred the MD candidate and the DO candidate.
Figure 2 a) HPB Faculty educational background percentage b) HPB Fellow educational background percentage
Table 1. Most desired traits when selecting HPB fellows

Results

The demographic survey of the faculty members and past fellows consisted of all MDs (both US and foreign). In the case-based portion of the survey, 67% selected the DO candidate and 50% of the total respondents explicitly stated that they preferred the MD candidate over their DO counterpart because of their degree. However, the most important traits included motivation, passion, work ethic, collegiality, professionalism, academic productivity, and technical skill; medical degree was not mentioned by any respondents.

Additionally, no DO faculty or fellows were reported in the survey. Faculty comprised of 79% US MD and 21% Non-US MDs. Fellows comprised of 51% US MD and 49% Non-US MD.

Conclusions

Being a DO candidate may provide to be a disadvantage when applying to HPB surgery fellowship program, as evident by DOs being underrepresented in this surgical field. However, there are much more significant factors, such as passion and work ethic when selecting an HPB surgery fellow.

Reference

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