

119. There are trends towards increasing specialisation in medicine at a moment when some OECD countries are promoting a primary care-led health care system. In order to encourage the choice of a primary care speciality by students, countries can place more emphasis on primary care training, on exposure to primary care experiences and on introduction of primary care role models. Meanwhile, there is evidence to suggest that it is the more favourable conditions of service, such as regular work schedules and more leisure time, that attract students to primary care specialities.

120. The services delivered by physicians depend on their productivity as well as on their numbers. There has been some investigation of the effect of methods of remuneration on physician productivity. A review of the relevant literature confirms what might be expected: that fee-for-service methods of payment raise activity per physician compared with salaried or capitated methods of payment. However, it is not clear what impact, if any, higher activity levels per physician have on the quality of care they deliver. There has been much interest in, and experimentation with, physician payment methods which reward quality of care directly in a number of countries. However, such developments continue to be constrained by technical difficulties in measuring and monitoring quality of care across much of the range of services provided by doctors.

121. This study suggests that many questions remain to be answered about the best way to match the supply to the demand for physician services. Although a range of policy instruments for influencing supply have been identified, there is a lack of systematic evidence about the relative effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of using these different instruments. Similarly, much remains to be discovered about the best way to plan for, or regulate, entry to the medical profession, given the tendency for training programmes to experience cycles of boom and bust, arising mainly from the lags inherent in completing long professional