

GEOGRAPHIC AND TEMPORAL TREND IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF PHYSICIANS UNDER THE GOVERNMENT-INITIATED COLLABORATIVE PROJECT TO INCREASE PRODUCTION OF RURAL DOCTORS IN THAILAND

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Introduction:

An adequate supply of physicians is needed to ensure access to affordable and quality health care. Over the past two decades, the shortage of physicians in Thailand has reportedly been improved following the special government intervention – the Collaborative Project to Increase Production of Rural Doctors (CPIRD). However, whether this led to the uniform distribution of the physicians remained unclear. This study was aimed to examine the comparative proportions of the CPIRD medical graduates who remained in their hometown in the last 15 years.

Methods:

CPIRD student database was merged with health workforce information of the Ministry of Public Health using unique national identification numbers. We examined the proportion of CPIRD medical graduates who remained in their hometowns where they were initially assigned to work in. We compared the proportions across geographical regions and 5-year graduation cohorts, using chi-2 test.

Results:

Among 4,834 CPIRD graduates, 4,337 (89.7%) remained working in the provinces initially assigned. The percentage of the physicians that remained in their hometowns varied across geographical regions ($p < 0.001$), with the highest percentages of 97.6% and 93.1% for Eastern and Southern regions. For every 5-year period of the project, the remaining rates increased from 71.4, 75.2 to 95.9% for graduation years 2000-2004, 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 respectively ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions:

A significant proportion of physicians under the government-initiated CPIRD project remained working in their hometown, with proportions varying across geographical regions and increasing over time.

Take home message: