

Descriptive study of job opportunities in the allergy field

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To the editor,

Allergy is a fairly young medical specialty exercised in Spain from 1926 and recognized in 1978 with a specific formation program. In 1948, the first Spanish Society of Allergy was constituted and from 1974 it goes on as its current denomination “Spanish Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (SEAIC)” [1]. Currently, it is integrated by 1518 associates, 15 % of which are under 35-year-old.

We have not a record of junior member’s employment status and the subjective vision of low supply of jobs exists, which is not very engaging for many of the doctors who choose a specialty. The objective of this work is to describe the current employment situation of young allergists, the job opportunities after their training, the percentage of unemployment and the percentage of abandonment of the specialty. Possible strategies can be proposed by SEAIC to promote the visibility of specialists and initiatives to increase the attractiveness of Allergology.

The commission of young allergists and Interns (CAJMIR) of the SEAIC, performed a survey between its members of different geographical areas, which included information of the specialists formed between the years 2009 to 2019, related to its labor situation as well as the stage of unemployment and abandonment of the specialty. The information of the employment situation included the public and private practice, scholarships or other situations. There was not information obtained about the quality or job type (full time, temporary...). Descriptive statistics were performed using IBM SPSS v. 20 (IBM corporate, Armonk, New York, USA).

The Ministry of Health offered 591 Allergology positions between 2009-2019, of which 574 were chosen. Data were obtained from 487 people (85% of the positions), 72% were women (n = 350), 18% men (n = 90) and data for the remaining 10% (n = 47) were unknown. The 4.51% (n = 22) had a previous specialty, highlighting family and community medicine (37%) and pediatrics (18%).

In the period studied, 291 people (60%), obtained the title of specialist, 153 (31%) continue in training and 43 people abandoned the specialty during their training (8.8%)

Among the specialists, 30 dropouts were registered, 13 of them has chosen a new specialty, 15 allergists work as general practitioners or in the emergency room and two work in their previous specialty.

From the total of qualified allergists, 78% (n = 226) are currently working as allergy specialists, 58% (n = 131) work in public health, 33% of them, being compatible with private practice. The remaining 42% (n = 95), work exclusively in private healthcare. Research grant was obtained by 5.8% (n = 17) of the specialists (4 of them without simultaneous medical practice). Lastly, 2% (n = 6) works in the pharmaceutical industry.

With these data, the nationwide percentage of unemployment reported is 2% (n = 6). However, it was not possible to gather data on the employment situation of 19 specialists. It is possible that this percentage could vary upwards, increasing to 8.5% if these allergists were unemployed. Likewise, we do not know the reasons of young specialists to leave. Likely, a proportion of them did not find a job at the end of the specialty.

Aragon, Canarias and Navarra are the areas with the lowest number of young allergists in Public Health, followed by Cantabria and Andalucía. On the other hand, Galicia and the Basque Country, have a high percentage of young allergists in the public healthcare (100% and 71%). Aragón and Canarias stand out in the areas with a high private activity, with 86% and 83% respectively. In the rest of the communities, specialists are distributed in a similar way between public and private practice.

Allergology is currently considered a specialty with an attractive means of choice [2], compared to specialties such as Cardiology or Dermatology. Despite the high prevalence of allergic diseases [3], in the public health system, there has been no substantial increase in the number of places offered for specialists, what did happen in the private sector.

Due to the growing demand, an adequate distribution of allergists is essential. The World Allergy Organization (WAO) recommends 1 allergist per 50,000 inhabitants [4-5], which currently varies greatly between autonomous communities. In this sense, private activity represents, in several communities, an alternative for a large number of allergists and for users throughout the Spanish geography.

In fact, several communities have private allergy units with a wide portfolio of services, comparable to public health.

The type or quality of the contracts has not been analyzed due to its complexity, since each community has different forms of contracting.

The reasons for leaving the specialty have not been considered either. It is possible that it could be related to individual attractiveness or to the lack of employment for the specialist at the time of completing their training.

In case of cessation of specialty due to future prospects, the number of places in certain areas could be reconsidered or the relocation of the allergists in training (MIR) of Allergology into more favorable areas.

Research is an essential requirement for scientific progress, and through SEAIC or public organizations, research opportunities are promoted through scholarships. This alternative has taken on an increasingly more prominent role in the medical practice of the allergist, currently representing an opportunity for young people with a research profile. Whereas, the percentage is lower than expected, probably because the data has been obtained indirectly, so lower values than reality are reflected. However, this motivates a future line of enhancement in search of promoting the appropriate measures so that it is considered as another future opportunity for allergists.

In conclusion, there are great work opportunities in the allergology specialty, with a relatively low unemployment rate. Public Healthcare welcomes the highest percentage of young specialists, although a high number of allergists also work in private health system, being able to receive bilateral feedback with continuing training, research and giving greater strength and visibility to the specialty.

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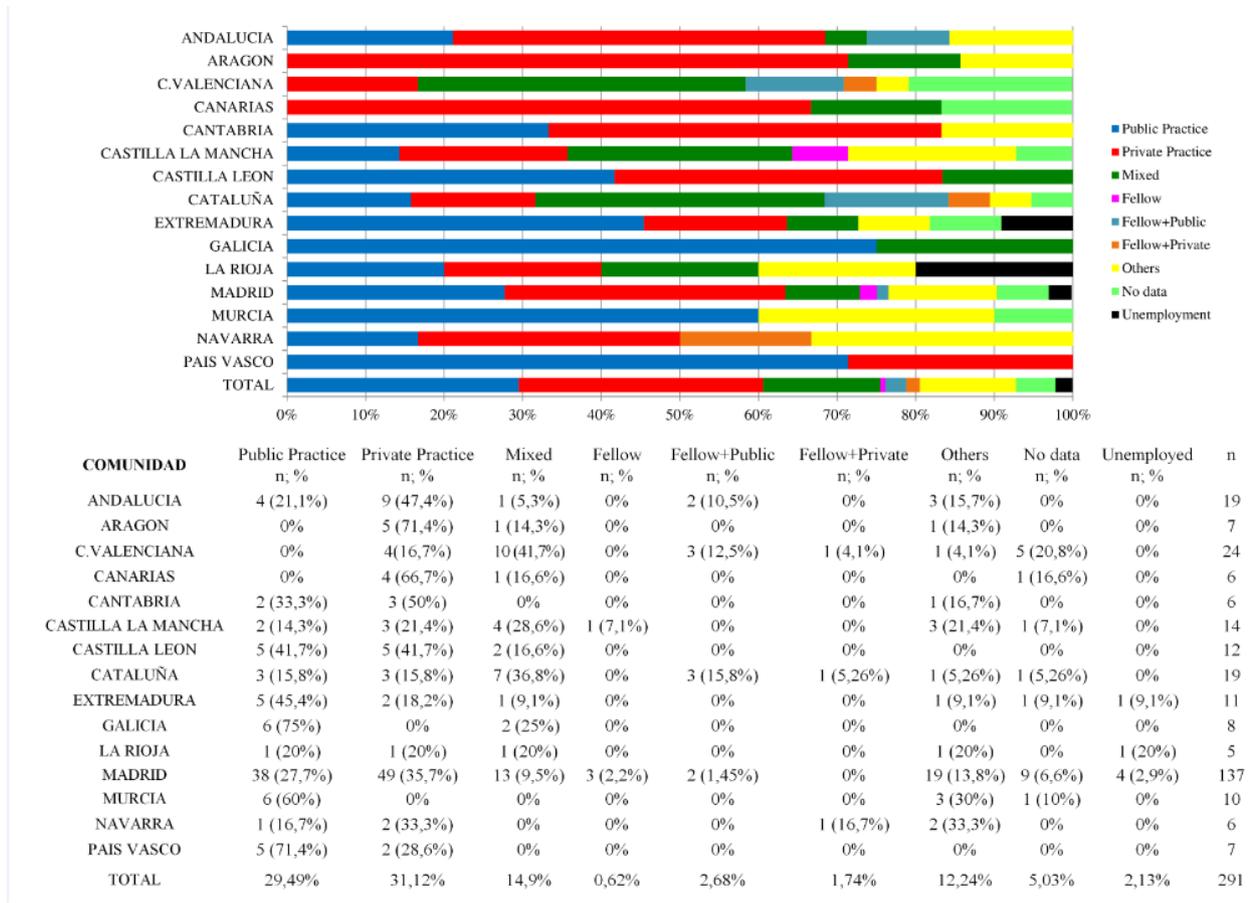
Conflicts of interest

The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest.

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Figure: Labor situation of allergists specialized between 2013 y 2019



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