

MABEL

Medicine in Australia: Balancing Employment and Life
(www.mabel.org.au)

Further information

How will this study benefit you and patient care?

Having a reasonable workload enables you to practise medicine the way you want to, helps to increase the quality of care, and helps improve the availability of medical and other health services to the population. Increased pressures on workload can be further compounded by a complex and often unsupportive health system. The 'right' balance between working time and time enjoying family and leisure is becoming more difficult to maintain for many doctors.

The information you provide in the MABEL survey will be used to:

- Improve your morale and work satisfaction, thus leading to improved patient care;
- Improve the population's access to medical services;
- Develop policies to help you manage your workload; and
- Improve the evidence base of medical workforce policy.

You will also receive a newsletter containing key survey results, information about how results are being used to change policy, and progress with MABEL.

Why is this study distinctive and different?

- MABEL is not just an academic exercise, but is closely linked to the implementation of evidence based on your views and preferences, and to developments in local and national medical workforce policy.
- The longitudinal nature of the survey means that you will be followed up over time (if you choose to be included in future waves) and will enable us to examine how your circumstances change over time, and what effect these changes are having on your working and family life.

Is MABEL supported by medical professionals' organisations and governments?

- MABEL is endorsed by key medical organisations and colleges, as listed on the back of the invite letter and on the front of the questionnaire.
- MABEL also has a Policy Reference Group which is providing advice about the medical workforce policy issues that will inform the collection and analysis of data. This group includes representatives from the Department of Health and Ageing, the Australian Medical Association, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia, Rural Health Workforce Australia, the Queensland and Victorian Health Departments, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Who is funding and conducting MABEL?

- MABEL is being funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for five years in the first instance. The title of the grant application is: "*Understanding the Dynamics of the Medical Workforce to Improve Population Health and Equity of Access: the Australian Longitudinal Survey of Doctors*".
- The survey is being conducted and analysed by researchers at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne (Professor Anthony Scott and Associate Professor Guyonne Kalb), in collaboration with the Department of General Practice (Dr. Catherine Joyce) and the School of Rural Health (Professor John Humphreys) at Monash University.

What will I be asked to do?

- We are asking you to fill out a questionnaire, which should take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete.
- The study gives you an opportunity to tell us about:
 - Your preferences in regard to working in medicine and which aspects of your medical work you like and dislike;
 - The medical work you do; and
 - Your family life.
- There are two ways that you can complete the survey:
 - i) Complete the hardcopy survey sent to you, OR
 - ii) Complete the survey online. Go to our secure website www.mabel.org.au and login using the username and password provided on the enclosed letter.
- Since this is a longitudinal study we will contact you again next year (and every year for which the study is funded) to ask you to complete the survey, although of course you can choose to cease participation at any time. (The NHMRC has committed to providing funding for the first four waves of the study, but we will be seeking to extend the funding.)

How was I contacted?

- Your name and address are held by the Australasian Medical Publishing Company (AMPCo). AMPCo provided us (under their own privacy guidelines) with a computer file containing your name, address, age, gender and your AMPCo unique identifier, as well as information on your field of practice. We need this information to check that our respondents are representative of all doctors in Australia. We then added our own unique MABEL username and password. This file was then returned to AMPCo, who posted an invite letter to you through their mailing house.

Will the information I provide remain confidential and secure?

- Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times and the information you provide will be protected. The information provided in the questionnaire will be kept for at least 15 years, as this is a longitudinal survey.
- If you choose to fill out the questionnaire online, the information you provide will be encrypted and transmitted via a secure website (the padlock icon will appear in your browser window once you login). The data you provide will be held on a secure server located physically within the Melbourne Institute and not connected to the internet.
- The information you provide in the questionnaire will be linked to your MABEL username and password only (and not your name and address). This is necessary so that we can instruct AMPCo who to send reminder letters to, and who to contact in the second and subsequent years of the survey. We will also use the MABEL username to link the information you provide across years.
- The published results will not contain any identifiable information on individuals as all results are presented across aggregated groups of individuals. Unit record (individual-level) data from the survey may be made available in de-identified format for use by other researchers in other research projects, with prior ethical approval and under contract to the Melbourne Institute. This will enable the data to be used widely by other researchers, thus increasing the chances of influencing policy. De-identification means that all information in the data that could directly or indirectly be used to identify you is removed or aggregated to a less detailed level.
- All researchers involved in this project must comply with the Privacy Act (1988) and data will be stored in accordance with the University of Melbourne's Management of Data and Research Records policy. This means that the data are stored on a secure server physically located within the Melbourne Institute. The server and data can be accessed only by the research team.
- The Melbourne Institute and its staff operate within the University of Melbourne's ethics guidelines and MABEL has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, as well as by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics Involving Research on Humans. Any concerns or complaints about the broad conduct of the survey should be directed to the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, ph: 03 8344 2073, fax: 03 9347 6739.
- Participating in the survey is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You can also choose to have any of your unprocessed data excluded from the analysis by contacting the research team and quoting your MABEL username (enquiries@mabel.org.au).

More information:

Further information is available on the MABEL website: www.mabel.org.au, or by emailing: enquiries@mabel.org.au, or by contacting the Principal Investigator (Professor Anthony Scott, ph: 03 8344 2100, email: a.scott@unimelb.edu.au) or the Survey Manager (Anne Leahy, ph: 03 8344 2600).