

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 in the way you prefer, helps to increase the quality of care, and helps improve the availability of medical and other health services to the population. Increased pressures on your workload are further compounded by a complex and often unsupportive health system. The 'right' balance between your working time and the time you have to enjoy family and leisure is becoming more difficult to maintain.

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 policy based on evidence incorporating 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), enabling 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 profession organisations and governments?

- MABEL has been endorsed by key medical colleges and organisations.
- 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, and help ensure that results are policy-relevant and acted upon.

Who is funding and conducting MABEL?

- MABEL is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) through a Health Services Research Grant (2007–2011) and through the Centre of Research Excellence in Medical Workforce Dynamics (2012–2016).
- 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 you 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 log in using the username and password provided in 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. (MABEL is now funded until 2016.)

How were you 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 provided your details to a commercial mailing house who posted the invite letter on our behalf.

Will the information you 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 log in). The data you provide will be stored on a secure server that can only be accessed by the research team and designated IT staff.
- 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 identify who to send reminder letters to, and who to contact in 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 will 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.
- 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 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).