

SUNDAY STAR TIMES, 25 MAY 2008, Edition A, Page 3.

Doctors ambitious in love - but the heartland loses out

By: MUSSEN Deidre

WANT TO marry a doctor? You might have to get a similarly high-powered job, a new study has found.

The research by Victoria University reveals the romantic notion that male doctors marry nurses is no longer the case - and who they're choosing as partners is affecting the country's health workforce.

The paper by the university's Institute of Policy found doctors were now more likely to choose partners who were also in professional careers. This, together with the fact more doctors were in relationships and the greater ratio of female doctors, made it harder to employ doctors in rural areas because of their partners' career needs.

Co-author Dr Paul Callister, a senior research fellow, said male doctors in the past were more likely to marry nurses or teachers, who could find work in rural settings.

For example, 14% of male doctors were in relationships with a nurse or midwife in 1986 but two decades on, that number had dropped to 9%.

These days, they were more likely to choose fellow doctors, lawyers or accountants, who might prefer to work in larger cities or could struggle to find jobs in rural areas, Callister said.

"Now it's more about where both people can develop their careers. It's a worldwide trend that highly skilled, high-income people are tending to stay in bigger cities."

While female doctors were less likely to have partners than their male counterparts, that had increased from 62% in 1986 to 70% with partners by 2006. Also, the proportion of female doctors rose from 22% of the medical workforce in 1986 to 40% by 2006.

That meant their partners' careers increasingly affected where female doctors would live and work, Callister said.

The paper noted foreign doctors increased from 36% to 52% during the two decades.

However, Callister said a significant number were doctors who were born overseas but either lived in New Zealand most of their lives and trained here or were long- term residents.

An unusual quirk was that 7% of Maori doctors working in New Zealand in 2006 were born overseas so were considered foreign doctors.

Part: A

Section: NEWS

Sub-Section: NATIONAL

Topics: MEDICAL PROFESSIONS ; SOCIOLOGY ; STATISTICS

Sub-Topics: NEW ZEALAND CITIES AND REGIONS

) Fairfax Sunday Newspapers, Copyright of Fairfax New Zealand Limited 2008, All rights reserved.