Introduction: Clinical training is one of the most important parts in medical education. The main purpose of this training is to improve practical skills of young students and to prepare them perfectly for their medical career. In Austria, students may choose to pass their clinical training in external teaching hospitals. At the moment the relevance and quality of education in these hospitals compared to university hospitals remains unclear.

Methods: Between March 2013 and February 2014 an anonymous and voluntary survey among medical students at the Institute of Pathophysiology and Immunology, Medical University of Graz, was conducted. Participating students were requested to answer a questionnaire including ten items concerning their opinion about the necessity of clinical training and the relevance and quality of teaching hospitals compared to university hospitals. Questionnaires were returned personally, by post or per mail and evaluated anonymously.

Results: Overall 121 participating students returned their questionnaire. 109 (90.1%) questionnaires of students in their second year of medical education were included into the statistical evaluation, 12 (9.9%) questionnaires were excluded for missing experience of these students with teaching hospitals. According to the opinion of all students, the proportion of clinical training in medical education should be 42.4%. Surgical training was seen as very important or important in 69.8% (figure 1). 86.3% of the students evaluated external hospitals as very important or important locations for their clinical training; the quality of medical education was evaluated as very good or good in 69.8% compared to university hospitals (figure 2 and 3). Clinical training in operating theatres was very important or important in 67.8% and in 66.1% in outpatient’s units respectively. Bedside teaching was important in 51.4%. Practical training should be the main part in these units (>50% practice) compared to theory.

Discussion: In literature there is no data about the relevance of teaching hospitals for medical students or the quality of education in these institutions. The presented study showed that the significance of teaching hospitals is high, maybe based on the fact that the possibility to choose a hospital for clinical training is important for students. However, the quality of education in teaching hospitals was rated excellent and absolutely comparable to university hospitals. Educational quality seems to be a main point in student’s decision for a teaching hospital.

Conclusion: Teaching hospitals represent an important possibility to improve practical skills in high educational quality for students. Clinical training, especially in surgery represents a main part in medical education.