

Health Policy Forums

Innovative Approaches to Medical Education

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The fall season of Health Policy Forums opened up with a presentation by M. Brownell (Brownie) Anderson, the Senior Director for Educational Affairs at the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). Ms. Anderson is responsible for curriculum and evaluation of medical student education programs throughout the US.

Ms. Anderson provided context to the topic by sharing a brief overview of the history of medical education in the US. Noting the 100th anniversary of the Flexner Report, Ms. Anderson described its remarkable influence and the subsequent theoretical and didactic changes in medical education practices. Flexner advocated a need for organizational change, shifting toward a more vigorous university model. One significant result of this report was the introduction of the notion of an admissions policy. Though he wrote his report for a single generation, Flexner's influence has served as the foundation for medical education for generations. Ms. Anderson described changes in curriculum

over the past 30 years. Today there is a shift toward a hybrid of problem/clinical case, systems, outcomes and competency-based education. Ms. Anderson discussed the emphasis on competency-based education and assessment. "Competency is the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and the community being served."¹

She presented the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI)/AAMC report of the "Scientific Foundations for Future Physicians" and noted that competencies promote a shift away from required courses; competencies are measured through accomplishments. Schools are fostering interprofessional education and learning as well. Competencies will be updated on a regular basis.

Current popular topics and themes in medical education include global health, cultural

competency, and business education. Due to considerable interest in global health, AAMC, in partnership with the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), has created a website for students and faculty that identifies opportunities for international exchanges. The URL is: <http://www.faimer.org/resources/opportunities/>

Ms. Anderson predicted that globalization, competencies, and interprofessional education will continue to be key themes in policy and medical education for the foreseeable future. ■

*For more information on AAMC, visit:
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