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Health Administration and Health Policy in Residency Education Programs

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Health Administration and Health Policy in Residency Education Programs

The impact of economic, administrative, social and political forces on the practice of medicine has been steadily increasing. However, there has been little exposure to health care administration principles and health care policy issues in residency education programs.

A literature search of the Medline data base identified minimal attention to this type of education. The programs which are described in the literature mainly focus on topics related to practice management, but even these are inadequate.

Residents need to be prepared for the realities of medical practice and the forces which are continuously remodeling it. Medical school may be too early in the training of future doctors for an adequate appreciation of these topics. Residency may be the best time for such education, for this is when doctors-in-training take on more patient care responsibilities and begin to discover the issues and intricacies of patient care.

A 1983 survey of Family Practice programs, found that although nearly all residency directors agreed on the appropriateness of practice management training, it was underemphasized and may need a more structured approach. Kellerman's conclusion is reflective of most other articles, reporting the overall recognition of the importance of the topic, but pointing out the gross shortcomings of current training.

An elective or rotation devoted exclusively to health care administration and policy may be the best way to meet the need for this type of training. Cordes et al describe the incorporation of management and administration training into preventive and occupational medicine residency programs using a variety of techniques which include a required one-month rotation devoted exclusively to administration. Ginn and Thompson describe a one-month hospital administration rotation for emergency medicine residents at an Army hospital. The adoption of comparable rotations by residency training programs would help to prepare new physicians for the economic, social and political realities of health care.

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Ralph O. Bischof and James D. Plumb: Health Administration and Health Policy in Residency Education Programs

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