Training Future Physicians as Public Health Leaders: Jefferson’s MD/MPH Graduate Education Program

The Obama Administration and leaders of the 11th Congress have made health care reform a priority—specifically emphasizing prevention and population health as a way to improve Americans’ health and reduce costs over the long term. A key component is to address the growing need for appropriately trained health care providers working in our public health system.

There are a number of health care challenges that require physicians who are trained to treat individual patients within a larger context of family, community and society. These include infectious diseases; the significant increase in chronic disease due to the aging of our population; the potential detrimental health impact of climate change; and the continued racial, ethnic, and cultural disparities in health care access in our increasingly diverse society.

A recent report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that the U.S. needs 20,000 physicians in public health, with an annual replacement need of 1,350.

The appeal to improve public health education for physicians is not new, but instead has grown steadily over the years. Since 2000, several reports have been issued by national organizations such as the Institute of Medicine on the need and strategies to improve population health education in medical curricula. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has expressed continued interest in public health education focused on quality and effective clinical practice with evidenced-based public health and prevention principles, theories, skills, and practice.

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REFERENCES