Medical schools should ensure and improve global health education

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Published in:
LANCET

DOI:
10.1016/S0140-6736(19)31254-1

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2019

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

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Medical schools should ensure and improve global health education

As global health educators and researchers from the Netherlands, we read the assessment by Amelia Seifalian and colleagues1 of the status of global health education in the UK with interest and recognition. Although nearly all of the universities in the Netherlands offer global health-themed education activities, such as global health courses and clinical and scientific internships abroad (including training before the overseas internship and peer coaching sessions while abroad),2 we believe the value of this education is often underappreciated. This under-appreciation is reflected by the extracurricular nature of these activities, the varying degrees of preparation before overseas placements, and the inequitable international exchange opportunities due to financial barriers.

We believe that medical schools, not students, should bear the primary responsibility to offer global health learning opportunities in which students gain competencies necessary to work in a multicultural, globalised society, and should equip future doctors with the ability to adapt to the overseas internship and peer coaching sessions while abroad.3 We consider the provision of clinical or research internships a crucial strategy to this end, if embedded within sustainable partnerships to reduce commercialisation, prevent medical tourism, and create reciprocity of benefits, rather than a unidirectional relationship of care; build quality health systems that place the health agenda under the umbrella of UHC, and to sustain harmonised health investments.

The UN High-Level Meeting must be truly transformative, as called for by civil society.4 UHC2030 has developed a set of key asks (panel) through a broad consultative process. We propose an agenda for the UN High-Level Meeting political declaration, with milestones for achieving UHC by 2030. Across these recommendations, we urge political leaders to recommit to gender equality, redress gender power dynamics, and uphold women’s and girls’ rights, all of which are foundational principles for UHC. UHC2030 and the global movement for UHC call on heads of state to lead, legislate, invest in, and collaborate with all of society.

IK and GG are co-chairs of UHC2030. We declare no competing interests.

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UN high-level meeting: time to act on universal health coverage

We are restless for change. UHC2030 is a multi-stakeholder platform that aims to strengthen the global movement for universal health coverage (UHC), and we are calling for urgent action. As stakeholders from governments, civil society, the private sector, development partners, academia, and the media, we are pushing for all countries to implement UHC as fast as possible.

When all 193 member states of the UN agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, they set out an ambitious agenda for a safer, fairer, and healthier world by 2030. UHC is a target of SDG 3, but UHC is not only about health; it has far-reaching effects across economies and societies in general.5

On Sept 23, 2019, a UN high-level meeting will take place, with the theme of UHC: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World. This meeting is the last chance before 2023, the midpoint of the SDGs, to mobilise the highest political support to bring the health agenda under the umbrella of UHC, and to sustain harmonised health investments.

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Panel: Key asks from the universal health coverage movement

- Ask 1: ensure political leadership beyond health; commit to achieve universal health coverage for healthy lives and wellbeing for all at all stages, as a social contract
- Ask 2: leave no one behind; pursue equity in access to quality health services with financial protection
- Ask 3: regulate and legislate; create a strong, enabling regulatory and legal environment responsive to people’s needs
- Ask 4: uphold quality of care; build quality health systems that people and communities trust
- Ask 5: invest more, invest better; sustain public financing and harmonise health investments
- Ask 6: move together; establish multi-stakeholder mechanisms for engaging the whole of society for a healthier world

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