

IMWC Melbourne 2005 – Preamble: Medical Workforce Expansion – Commitment and Capacity

Despite the role of IMG the local medical education system is responsible for producing the majority of physicians in most countries. This system is divided into the undergraduate (core medical training) and the post-graduate (residency training) stages.

The historical fluctuations in the number of physicians produced is linked to policy decisions that affect the number and capacity of the undergraduate system and the number, capacity and type of post-graduate positions. Similarly, how physicians ultimately practice may be partially governed by the nature of the training that they receive while in training.

There is growing concern by many about an adequate supply of physicians for the future. This has been largely in response to reduced participation of the current, ageing workforce (which is likely to be a feature of the prospective workforce), coupled with an increased demand for services. In response most countries have been increasing the number of positions in existing medical schools and in some cases creating new medical schools. This planned expansion is quantified in the attached report. The purpose of this paper is to address the following questions:

Undergraduate:

1. What are the primary challenges facing medical schools in any planned expansion?
2. How can medical schools address these challenges?
3. Beyond challenges related to increasing capacity should current expansion be linked to changes in the content or structure of the curriculum in order to ensure that new graduates are best prepared to meet the needs of society?

Post-graduate:

1. Is the lengthening of training through longer post-graduate programs and the addition of fellowship training a positive trend? If not what are potential solutions?
2. What is the correct ratio of post-graduate: medical school positions?