Report calls for action to improve the student experience of general practice in medical schools

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A system-wide approach is needed to change the perception of the learning environment in medical schools to encourage more students to choose a career in general practice says a new report published today.

The report ? By choice ? not by chance? looks at students? experiences whilst at medical school and shines the spotlight on the need to tackle long held views about general practice which is often perceived as a less valued career. Change is key to making sure we have the GP workforce required to meet service and patient demands for the future.

Health Education England (HEE) and the Medical Schools Council (MSC) commissioned Professor Val Wass OBE to investigate how general practice is taught in medical schools and make recommendations to HEE and other key partners. Val was supported by a task force which included, British Medical Association (BMA), Junior doctors, Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the Society for Academic Primary Care (SAPC).

Students interviewed for the report said they were significantly influenced not only by the complex context in which they learn but also by Royal Colleges, research organisations and the media.

They also said they experience an uncomfortable divide between primary and secondary care across which they meet unfortunate ? professional tribalism? leading them to perceive primary care to be of ?lower status?. Low morale in general practice was also highlighted as an issue.

The report puts forward a number of recommendations for consideration, including:

- An urgent review of the current funding systems, processes and guidance for distributing money for undergraduate teaching to ensure equity and quality of learning for students to mirror modern and future health care delivery.
- The need to develop and promote awareness and understanding of general practice to pupils in primary and secondary schools through outreach and greater interaction between school/college pupils and staff.
- Improving access to the quality of work experience in general practice for prospective medical students, in line with work experience opportunities more readily available in secondary care.
- The General Medical Council (GMC) to work with all medical schools to revise their undergraduate curricula to ensure they develop to reflect the patient journey through different healthcare settings.
- Greater collaboration to raise the academic profile and future vision of general practice and tackle the tensions which surround general practice.

Professor Wendy Reid, Director of Education and Quality, Health Education England said:

?I would like to thank Professor Wass for her hard work on this report.

?Health Education England is committed to helping to change the perception of general practice as a career
choice and welcomes this informative report and the challenges it sets for the system.

?There needs to be a system-wide approach to changing long held views about general practice being a poor relation to working in a hospital and working with partners to improve the image of general practice through promoting the role not only in medical schools but in primary and secondary schools.

?We need to properly value the role GPs play at the heart of the NHS and the impact they have on the service.?

Professor Val Wass OBE said:

?The challenge has been to seek practical feasible recommendations, which hold strong, positive commitment to deliver and contribute to solving the current crisis. Our aim has not been to blame but to catalyse change.

?Our recommendations are made acknowledging the complexity of the student experience not only within the university campus but across their clinical placements in hospital trusts, general practice and community organisations.

?General practice now has a great opportunity to raise its profile and status.?

Dr Katie Petty-Saphon, Chief Executive Medical Schools Council said:

"Medical Schools are committed to becoming the catalyst for change recommended in the report. General practice is an extremely intellectually challenging specialty and medical schools will do all they can to prepare students to support patients in the community in increasing numbers."

A copy of the report is available to view here [1].


Links