
Medical schools promote desperately-needed leadership training



Healthcare systems are evolving rapidly and medical schools need to keep up by strengthening programmes to help physician leaders master the diverse skills necessary to navigate emerging challenges in the field, according to a new Perspective article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

"Academic medicine has been somewhat complacent in the face of the disruptive forces in healthcare, and as a result, the gap between the physician-leader workforce and the needs of our system has only widened," says J. Larry Jameson, MD, PhD, executive vice president of the University of Pennsylvania for the Health System and dean of Penn's Perelman School of Medicine.

Closing this gap will require leadership skills that are not acquired during traditional medical training, Dr. Jameson points out.

Leadership skills gap

Today's physicians practice in an era of changing payment models, rising costs, IT advances, and emerging technologies and therapies that are reshaping the delivery of patient care. Dynamic changes have also come with ongoing health system mergers and market consolidation. To lead effectively in this environment, doctors need not only sharp clinical expertise, but also opportunities to hone their communication, team building, and decision making skills.

Moreover, it's important for physicians to have knowledge of finance, business planning and human resource management. This is because many physician leaders may manage budgets similar to those of medium-sized businesses, for example, and work in organisations which are among the largest employers in their community.

"Given the high rate of turnover among physician leaders, such as department chairs and deans, we can no longer afford to neglect the skills that are essential for leaders to succeed," according to Dr. Jameson and co-author Caryn Lerman, PhD, vice dean for Strategic Initiatives and the John H. Glick, MD Professor in Cancer Research in the Department of Psychiatry in the Perelman School of Medicine.

New training programmes

At Penn, the Perelman School of Medicine has joined with the Wharton School to create an executive education programme which will launch in 2019 for healthcare and academic medical leaders from across the nation and world. The new endeavour joins the Penn-Wharton MD/Master of Business Administration (MD/MBA) programme, which is designed for medical students interested in integrating their medical course work with training in managerial, financial, and technical expertise in the healthcare field.

Another example is Penn Medicine's Healthcare Leadership for Quality Residency Track. This two-year training pathway for future physician leaders is one of only a few in the country to offer a pathway for residents aspiring to be leaders in healthcare quality, patient safety, or informatics. So far, more than one hundred residents have participated in the programme.

"The 21st century physician leader must be equipped with a new tool kit of skills for the leadership agility necessary for them to respond proactively to rapidly changing environments," Dr. Lerman says. "Leadership development should be an organisational priority, preparing today's medical students and physicians to thrive in a continuously evolving era of healthcare."

Source: [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

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