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AMSE – Zagreb declaration on

The Role of the Medical School in Postgraduate Education

The postgraduate role of the medical school extends into clinical, specialist and research education. In all these, the medical school is a partner of the health-care system, and of the profession. This three-way partnership depends, for success, on mutual respect, communication and collaboration. This partnership also includes support from ministries both of health and of education, and society at large.

The statutory responsibilities in all aspects of postgraduate work may vary within and among different jurisdictions: but the principles of involvement are common to all. Medical schools across Europe recognise and welcome their postgraduate roles and responsibilities, notwithstanding any local variations in funding and regulatory arrangements.

In the continuum of medical education, good alignment of pre-graduate (undergraduate) and postgraduate education is essential. The transition of graduates from the educational system to the health-care system must be understood, structured and managed. The medical school must work with its partners – and be involved by its partners - in the arrangements for relevant internships, foundation programmes, and the like.

Today's society is asking that doctors be scientifically-based, possessing on the one hand theoretical knowledge and clinical skills, and on the other hand, skills in communication, human understanding and other competencies, in order to work in a patient-focussed, safe and effective environment. The medical school and its partners must understand at which time or times in undergraduate and postgraduate education knowledge, skills and attitudes are best acquired.

Medical School involvement in residency and specialist programmes is also essential. Specialist education must be delivered, in part, in an academic environment where learning processes and teaching excellence should be accountable to appropriate academic authority and to society at large. Provision of postgraduate training should be rewarded in a way that supports innovation and provides incentives for excellence. Selection into residency and speciality programmes should be a joint responsibility of all partners, including the medical school.

Funding of postgraduate medical education must be fair, transparent and adequate, and there should be no financial disincentive to institutions in the provision of good postgraduate education. Individual postgraduate students should be fairly remunerated whether pursuing a clinical career or an academic clinical career.

Clinical postgraduate trainees should have the opportunity for further research education, in order better to understand the basis of clinical practice and of its development. Research training during clinical training should be organised and properly funded. The possibility of integrating PhD programmes in medicine into postgraduate clinical studies should be offered, in order to shorten the total duration of the entire education, and at the same time improve the quality because it would enable a better integration of clinical research into clinical practice.

AMSE endorses the work of ORPHEUS in development of standards for research training in medical schools and faculties, and supports the position paper from the Aarhus meeting of ORPHEUS (<http://www.orpheus2009.org/>) about standards for PhD education.

The role of the mentor in postgraduate clinical and research education is vital. Mentor and mentee must work together as partners, and feedback between them is of particular importance. Training and professional development of mentors must be supported.

Quality assurance is vital to the improvement of postgraduate education and is a paramount collective responsibility of the academic community, health-care system, regulatory authorities and government.

Assessment methods and standards must be defined and documented, particularly workplace methods of assessment. Feedback should be encouraged and developed. Appropriate involvement of all partners, including academic partners, in assessment processes is necessary.

In conclusion, the medical school has responsibility in all aspects of postgraduate clinical, specialist and research education. It must work with its partners in order to promote quality in postgraduate work, and excellence in the future of medical research, education and care.



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