

Chapter 10

Essentials for Education and Training for Tomorrow's Physicians

Timothy Edward A. Barrett
University of the West Indies, Bahamas

ABSTRACT

Education and training of medical students and postgraduate residents must undergo a critical review in light of the changing times and attitudes. The demands of life in general are enough to provide significant stressors for today's students in addition to coping with pressures of balancing passing exams with meeting the expectations of family and instructors. This chapter will highlight the realities of the effect of the pressures of study on the students' mental health and well-being. It will then describe several changes that can be made to the way medical students are trained which then shifts the focus to personal growth and development and away from the traditional goals of knowledge, skills and competencies for the goal of passing the exams. In the end, this chapter will challenge readers and institutions to pause and reconsider the current approach to training of medical students.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the author will attempt to articulate the concerns about the way medical students are developed into physicians. These concerns have been shared with other colleagues. These concerns have also been discussed with persons in sensitive administration positions over the years. However, even though there is a listening ear, the author does not seem to be able to convince the powers that be to

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elevate the issues he will discuss to a level of priority that will result in changes to the way we train our medical students or our postgraduate residents. This chapter will focus on the realities of studying medicine today from the perspective of the whole person, as well as include suggestions to ameliorate the current conditions.

BACKGROUND

The demands of today's world are new and complex. The rapid development of technology and specifically computer technology and the internet have revolutionized every aspect of society and most significantly interpersonal dynamics. The glut of information that is readily available and the immediacy of global news are a two-edged sword in that one does not have to wait to be informed while on the other hand we often wish we had not heard some of the bad news. Social media have also had a profound impact on our interpersonal skills, eroding our face-to-face communication skills and the ability to deal with conflict while affecting our academics in that it appears that most people have to use a spell check to spell words.

Medical students and residents are not immune to the effects of this gradual but steady erosion of social skills in the author's opinion and therefore it is imperative to discuss the potential effects on the individual as well as the quality of health care services. The proper practice of medicine requires personal and interpersonal skills in addition to medical knowledge, skills and competencies. In the author's opinion the most beloved and effective doctors are not necessarily going to be the intellectually brilliant who never fail any exam and who are excellent technically, but will be those who embrace the opportunity to relieve suffering and improve the conditions of the *persons that they treat as patients* with warmth and genuineness. These are not the only character traits that are required but are fundamental and will be found consistently in the best physicians.

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The author's impression based on over forty years of practice, is that not too many years ago, the physician seemed to occupy a special place in the eyes of the people in the community and in the hospitals. He or she was the undisputed leader of the team and the developer of healthcare services in addition to being trusted to do his or her best for the patient. This unquestioning trust had a healing effect in that once the doctor reassured the patient; the patient would start the process of improvement from that instant on in quite many cases. Over recent years, the profession of

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