

# General Practice: The Future Teaching Environment

## A report on undergraduate primary care education in London

Readers of *The Back Pages* may be interested to know that an important report on undergraduate primary care education has been produced by the Heads of Departments of General Practice and Primary Care at London's five undergraduate medical schools; Bart's and the London, Imperial College, King's College London, St George's and UCL. It is entitled *General Practice: The Future Teaching Environment*.

The report is based on a study which included scrutiny of the relevant medical education research literature, analysis of faculty teaching material, and personal interviews with education leads from the five London medical schools. The study emerged from growing concern in medical school general practice circles in two areas. Firstly the possible adverse effects on community-based education that could result from some of the new models of care proposed within the NHS, such as alternative providers of healthcare and polysystems; and secondly the review currently in process of the NHS contribution to the funding of medical education through SIFT (Service Increment for Teaching) which may impact on resources available for community-based teaching in London.

The report was launched at the Royal College of General Practitioners at the time of publication. It was introduced and welcomed by Professor David Haslam, then President of the College, who stressed the importance of undergraduate medical education in inspiring, stimulating, supporting, and training future doctors. He reminded us of the key role of the generalist in medical education, and urged medical schools to ensure that all students have good experience of general practice embedded in the curriculum.

The study shows that there is good research evidence of the positive impacts of undergraduate teaching in the community for students, practices, health professionals, and patients. It describes how the teaching of medical students in general practice and community settings accounts for up to 15% of the undergraduate medical curriculum in London medical schools, each school working with up to 600 GP teachers and 400 teaching general practices. All schools have robust mechanisms for the quality assurance of these placements and student evaluations indicate high levels of satisfaction with undergraduate GP placements.

This report generated a good deal of discussion among the invited audience in the Long Room at the College. One particular concern was that non-NHS providers entering primary care will not have undergraduate and postgraduate training high on their agenda. Also, Lord Darzi's report on health care in London, while containing a number of interesting and promising proposals, was short on discussion about how the crucial function of education in general practice will be sustained, let alone enhanced. Future primary care developments in London must pay attention to the need to provide adequate teaching space and learning facilities for students.

While views vary on some of the general developments taking place in the NHS, the report argues that whatever changes may affect the future shape of primary care, support for teaching and learning in the community must be protected. Only in this way can we sustain and build upon the vital contribution of general practice to the education of future generations of doctors.

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Copies of the report: *General Practice: The Future Teaching Environment* are available at <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/medicine/depts/gppc/hodreport.html>

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