



CAME Voice/Voix

‘Hometowners’ – Dr. Rachel Ellaway

In previous decades where students’ training took place almost exclusively in large and anonymous hospitals it was unlikely that they would encounter anyone they knew from before they started their medical careers. Even if a student went to medical school in the same city in which they grew up it was unlikely that this would affect their training. Medical training has diversified significantly in the last decade or so and many schools now run training opportunities in smaller communities. When this is combined with a push to recruit from these communities in the hope of their returning to serve them then the likelihood that students will encounter those with whom they grew up becomes much more likely. Although there are ethical frameworks dealing with the treatment of family members, there is less guidance regarding friends of friends, former school teachers, and others they may know. Even if they do not treat these individuals their presence is more apparent in smaller community settings. At NOSM we call these students ‘hometowners’ and we have a rolling study looking at this phenomenon.

Hometown placements can be very positive experiences for students and their communities. Moreover, being denied a hometown opportunity can be particularly troubling for the student and sometimes also for a community that champions them. However, hometown placements are not just about the hometown student; others may be affected, in particular the hometown student's peers and other members of the care team. Despite the many benefits, hometown placements can involve a multitude of risks for the student and those around them and these need to be understood and steps taken to avoid or mitigate them before a placement starts, including making sure that everyone involved in a hometown placement needs to be well briefed and prepared for the issues that may arise.

Our exploration of the hometown phenomenon continues and we would like to connect with others across the country with experience of this issue and perhaps an interest in exploring it with us – contact me at rellaway@nosm.ca