CAME Voice/Voix

Preparing faculty members and students for eHealth: are Canadian medical schools doing enough?

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The use of modern health information and communication technologies is a rapidly growing part of healthcare. Federal and provincial governments are actively investing in electronic health records for improvement in health service planning and management through population health surveillance, while patients and the general public are increasingly interested in using mobile electronic devices for wellness and disease management. Given these changes, how can Canadian medical schools keep up with the rapid changes in digital health?

In 2013, the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada connected with a group of medical school educators from across Canada who were interested in eHealth and Health Informatics education and formed an eHealth education committee as part of a project supported by Canada Health Infoway. The core purpose of this committee was to identify key competencies in eHealth and Health Informatics for graduating medical students (see the link at the end of this article).

When the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada had started their CanMEDS 2015 revisions, our group was engaged (together with the AFMC) to extend the undergraduate competencies in eHealth and Health informatics to physicians' life-long learning continuum (see the link to the residency competency framework at the end of this article). A number of these competencies have been embedded into the recently-released CanMEDS 2015 competency Phase IV document.

Although there are an increasing number of faculty members in Canadian medical schools championing the cause of integrating eHealth and Health Informatics education into their schools' curricula, an environmental scan we conducted identified limited uptake, teaching and integration of eHealth education. Moreover, there are many medical students who are highly adept at using information technologies for their own learning and professional development, and are enthusiastic to participate in eHealth and Health Informatics educational design and implementation.

It would be both timely and important that the medical community as a whole connect and work together to establish a common national framework that guides eHealth and Health informatics education in Canadian medical schools. We would welcome input from all faculty and students interested in this area, and we invite them to work with us and our national organizations to ensure that tomorrow's doctors are able to practice and lead in an eHealth world. (Contact information Kendall Ho at kendall.ho@ubc.ca)

eHealth competencies for undergraduate medical education at https://chec-cesc.afmc.ca/sites/all/files/resource_files/eHealth%20Competencies%20for%20UME.pdf

eHealth competencies for postgraduate medical education at http://www.royalcollege.ca/portal/page/portal/rc/common/documents/canmeds/framework/ehealth_ewg_report_e.pdf