Integration of Public Health and Population Medicine Across the Curriculum

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Rationale

- Increased national emphasis on community health resources and social determinants of health. Models such as the Patient Centered Medical Home and Accountable Care Organizations include metrics specific to collaboration with public and community health agencies.
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- ACGME and LCME have revised educational standards to explicitly include public health, population medicine, and preventive medicine education. This is a reflection of a national movement to focus on our health system as a whole, incorporating both medical care, preventive medicine and public health, to allow for more effective care of individuals and communities.

Curriculum Objectives

The proposed objectives are:

1) Students will better understand population health and the role of public health professionals in the health system;
2) Students will better understand the influence of community and social determinants of health and how these impact their practice; and
3) Students will better understand public health prevention and use of prevention messaging and interventions in the care of patients.

In addition, incorporation of public health and population medicine will support the College and affiliated programs in achieving accreditation standards as well as standards imposed through PCMH and ACO guidelines.

Description of Curriculum

For over a decade, medical schools in the United States and Canada have been developing and testing models for instructing medical students in public health and related fields. Many successful models incorporate public health principles throughout the medical school curriculum, allowing students to apply public health principles to the care of individual patients. Examples include the integration of public health across all four years of the medical school curriculum at the University of Toronto and University of New Mexico, as well as the use of integrative case studies piloted at the University of Wisconsin.

The proposed curriculum in Year 1 and Year 2 would include:

1) A required orientation course on public health functions, philosophy and role within the larger health system (Year 1);
2) A required course on evidence-based prevention and social determinants of health (Year 2);
3) Required courses on epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy and health ethics (Year 1 and 2);
4) Integrative case studies, which are team activities requiring students to research both clinical and population implications of different patient care situations and the role of all parts of the health system in such situations (Year 1 and 2); and
5) Integration of public health and population medicine principles and competencies throughout the curriculum, including course readings.

In Years 3 and 4, the curriculum will focus on the communities where students are receiving their training, the resources available in the community, and the structure of the overall local health system. In all communities, the proposed curriculum will include:

1) Seminars on public health and community health services;
2) Incorporation of public health and community medicine into each clerkship;
3) Elective courses with placement for students in community health agencies;
4) Development of public health and population medicine scholarly projects; and
5) Elective certificate in Public Health through the CHM Program in Public Health.

Resources and Faculty Development

- Public Health resources have been developed through multiple College initiatives, including the Program for Public Health and the Preventive Medicine and Public Health Initiative (Department of Family Medicine)
- Most of Michigan’s local health department Medical Directors already hold community appointments within the College and have expressed interest in teaching medical students.
- Opportunities exist to incorporate public health instruction within other required courses by making small adjustments to existing courses instead of creating new ones.
- Many current faculty have training and expertise in public health and population medicine. Proposed curriculum will provide an opportunity for faculty, both on campus and in communities, to enhance their community health skills and help them achieve standards set forth through PCMH and ACO standards.
- Our unique structure places MSU CHM in a position to be an innovator in this field as we demonstrate implementation of these models within a large and diverse student body.

Discussion

Integrated public health education is essential for training future physician leaders. Success with such a venture would bring widespread recognition to our faculty, students, community partners, and the College of Human Medicine.

By integrating public health into the curriculum across learning experiences, we can assure that students have a working knowledge of the total health system. Our newly developed public health initiatives provide us with the expertise and relationships needed for success.