

Rethinking Medical Education: Some needed, overdue reforms

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In recent decades we've seen some admirable innovations in a subset of the world's medical schools, although only in parts of some of those innovative schools. Yet, much of what happens, day to day, in many medical schools is seriously inappropriate. Our dominant activities and strategies derive from patterns that were established long before there was systematic research about human learning and well before there were journals or other vehicles for sharing and enriching teachers' thinking about their work. As best as we can tell, most teachers in most medical schools, however well-intentioned some may be, are insufficiently prepared - and many are temperamentally unsuited - for their work as educators. They have read little about best practices in teaching and learning, and they are largely uninformed about the accumulated findings of decades of relevant educational research. Even fewer medical teachers know about the recent, rapidly growing body of evidence from brain research that can now help guide many of our instructional, communication and relationship strategies. In this presentation I offer my sense of some of our more serious flaws and invite you to reflect with me on what is needed if we take seriously our obligation to prepare the best possible physicians and other health professionals for the future.

In this session I will encourage you to:

- Recognize that many of our current educational assumptions and practices derive from traditions that were established before the days of good educational, psychological or brain research.
- Reflect on four domains of educational practice that are overdue for reform, and some of their implications for the future of medical education.
- Understand our brains' characteristics and limitations sufficiently to design and implement appropriate instructional approaches.
- Recognize, and explore ways we can adapt to, the serious limitations of human memory.

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Former Editor: **Education for Health: Change in Learning and Practice**

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