

POLICY DOCUMENT

INCREASED MEDICAL STUDENT NUMBERS

Background

AMSA is the peak representative body for Australia's medical students. In 2004 the Federal Government set about increasing medical student numbers to alleviate a nation-wide shortage of doctors. From 2004 until 2010 medical student numbers increased by over 65%, increasing from approximately 9000 students in 2004 to over 15000 in 2010. From the period 2004 until 2012, medical graduate numbers are predicted to increase by over 120%.

Currently, the Federal Government allocates a discreet number of Commonwealth-Supported Places for medicine to Universities. Beyond this however, Universities are allowed to enrol as many state-bonded, full-fee or international students as they wish.

Position Statement

AMSA believes that regulating the total number of medical students is essential to maintain quality clinical teaching and ensure medical graduates are trained to a high standard.

Policy

AMSA believes that:

1. Increases in medical student numbers are part of the solution required to address medical workforce shortages and an ageing Australian population.
2. Increases in medical student numbers should occur incrementally to ensure that the medical workforce is sufficient in number to allow appropriate student access to clinical teachers.
3. Increases in the number of medical students studying in Australia should be regulated by a single national body and only occur:
 - a. with extensive prior evaluation and planning of educational and clinical resources to ensure the quality of medical education is maintained
 - b. once equivalent funding and infrastructure has been made available to provide quality undergraduate, pre-vocational and vocational training places, including internships in accredited centres.
4. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders in medical education, including but not limited to Australian medical schools, Health Workforce Australia, the Australian Medical Council and state and federal governments, to demonstrate that a sufficient number of appropriate clinical training, intern and further training places are available to students and graduates.
5. Despite increases in medical student numbers, all students in Australian medical schools must have sufficient exposure to an extensive range of medical specialties and clinical settings including, but not limited to, public and, where appropriate, private hospitals; rural clinics; community health care facilities; and general practice.

6. Increases in medical student numbers must not negatively impact a Medical School's overall delivery of the curriculum or assessment of students.¹ This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. availability of physical facilities;
 - b. availability of educational resources
 - c. adequate assessment measures
7. In the face of increasing student numbers, clinical simulators may be useful in the delivery of medical education but that patient contact and tutelage from clinicians must remain the cornerstone of medical education.
8. Students should be involved in the consultative and decision making process towards the accommodation of increased student numbers.
9. In the setting of a workforce shortage, the number of available medical internships should be commensurate with the projected number of medical graduates; otherwise the imperative for increasing student numbers is not met.
10. Solutions, that maintain the quality of education, must be sought to alleviate the potential bottleneck for entry into vocational training, before the increased numbers of students reach this point in their careers.

Policy adopted February 2007

Policy updated February 2011

For review First Council 2013

References

1. Australian Medical Council, Assessment and Accreditation of Medical Schools: Standards and Procedures, 2011.
<http://www.amc.org.au/images/Medschool/Accreditation%20Standards%20Medical%20Schools%202010.pdf>. (accessed on 26th January 2011)