



MEDIA RELEASE
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Major Shifts in Medical Education in Australia

Medical education in Australia is dynamic and going through a period of unprecedented change, according to the Australian Medical Council (AMC).

Announcing the outcome of its medical school accreditation reviews and other decisions made at its Annual General Meeting on 25 November 2005, AMC President Dr Joanna Flynn said the volume of change under way in medical education was reflected in the AMC's medical school accreditation program.

In 2004, the AMC accredited three new medical schools. In 2005, the AMC reviewed the progress of these schools, agreed to assess the plans for another new medical school, and the plans by one established school to offer its medical course in Malaysia in 2007.

In 2004-2005, the AMC also reviewed Australia's first three graduate-entry medical programs, which were introduced in 1995-96, and continue to produce quality graduates.

'The changes are being driven by increased collaboration and better cross-fertilisation of ideas between schools – ensuring all schools are improving to meet the quality of the best', Dr Flynn said.

She also stated that, since its inception, the AMC had deliberately not stipulated what direction medical education in Australia should take. Instead, it had consciously fostered an environment of collaboration between universities and active peer review, to maximise best practice across medical schools.

'The level of innovation we see now and the diversity of approach to medical education in Australia demonstrates the value of this approach', Dr Flynn said.

Before the Council meeting, the Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon Tony Abbott MP, advised the AMC that a case had been made for the recognition of the new specialties of pain medicine and palliative medicine. As a result, the AMC considered the education and training programs available for doctors who wish to train in the new specialties. The AMC has advised the Minister on the accreditation of training programs in both specialties.

The AMC also confirmed it had submitted its report to the Minister on an application by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) for recognition of rural and remote medicine as a distinct specialty. The report will be published on the AMC's website after the Minister has considered the report and released his decision about ACRRM's application.

AMC accreditation is mandatory for all university medical schools, which must meet explicit accreditation standards. The accreditation process involves detailed analysis of the proposed curriculum and medical school resources, rigorous review of clinical training opportunities and visits from clinical and community based assessment teams.

General trends identified in 2004 were carried through to the 2005 accreditation process –

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including a greater focus on student directed learning, increased breadth of clinical experience beginning from first year and more emphasis on communication skills training.

All medical schools reviewed during 2005 received positive assessments from an AMC Assessment Team. **Executive summaries and recommendations from the accreditation reports are available on the AMC web site (www.amc.org.au).** A range of strengths is detailed in each report and in all cases opportunities for improvement were identified in order to promote continuous improvement.

In summary:

- The University of Notre Dame Australia¹ (UNDA) is a new medical school. The AMC reviewed the first year of the program (implemented in 2005) and the University's plans for Years 2 and 3 of the course. The AMC commended UNDA on its progress and collaboration with the University of Western Australia concerning clinical placements for students.
- The University of Tasmania is beginning a new five-year program, reflecting a complete turnaround in curriculum and approach. The AMC congratulated the Medical School's leadership, the staff commitment and the support of a wide range of other stakeholders, including the State and Commonwealth health departments, for the successful redevelopment of the course.
- The Australian National University Medical School is now implementing Year 2 of its four-year program, which developed from a clinical school of the University of Sydney. The AMC found the ANU program to have strong community support, backed by support from ACT Health for staffing and capital development. Particularly commended are the Population Health resources available to the School.
- The University of Auckland Medical School is a well established and well regarded school. It has implemented a major curriculum renewal strategy in the last three years. The AMC has commended the commitment of the University, the staff and clinical teachers to a high quality medical course relevant to the health care needs of the communities of New Zealand, the Pacific and beyond.
- The University of Queensland and The University of Sydney are both older established schools which are now graduating students from their graduate entry four-year programs. The implementation of the programs in these schools, together with Flinders University, marks the beginning of the current period of diversification, and collaboration between medical schools.

Ends.

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¹ Hot link to each Accreditation Report on the AMC website

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