



# Medical students to have more 'hands on' experience

## GMC launches new guidance Tomorrow's Doctors

Today's undergraduates – tomorrow's doctors – will see huge changes in medical practice. Becoming a doctor today is about so much more than understanding how the body works and developing technical skills. The demands of a doctor mean they must be excellent communicators, leaders and negotiators. They need to understand a condition in relation to a patient's environment, beliefs and outlook and communicate with them in a way that the patient understands.

To help doctors with this daunting prospect the GMC has just launched an updated version of Tomorrow's Doctors which sets out the outcomes medical students should achieve at medical school and what they need to know for their first posts as a trainee doctor. The guidance will ensure medical students have the right mix of medical knowledge and clinical ability as well as important communication skills.

In the new Tomorrow's Doctors there are standardised lists of practical diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that students will learn with lay descriptions of what the procedures involve. Students were, of course, often taught these procedures before, however in this new version of Tomorrow's Doctors the GMC is being more explicit about which procedures (including some new additions) need to be taught. The new list of specific clinical procedures ensures students are able to take advantage of advances in medical technology that allows increasingly lifelike training mannequins to be used for clinical procedures, as well as developing skills on real patients with consent and under supervision.

When drafting the guidance the GMC also responded specifically to concerns about education of medical undergraduates in the scientific basis of medicine, partnership with patients and colleagues, and commitment to improving healthcare and providing leadership. The guidance sets down new requirements to prepare 'The doctor as a scholar and a scientist' covering sciences such as anatomy, genetics and molecular biology.

New standards have also been set out for the delivery of medical education, with indications of the respective responsibilities of students, Medical Schools and healthcare providers. There is an emphasis on equality and diversity, involving employers and patients, the professional development of teaching staff, and ensuring that students derive maximum benefit from their clinical placements. Examples of these include supporting students with disabilities by making appropriate adjustments, collecting feedback from patients and employers about the preparedness of graduates and staff development programmes which promote teaching and assessment skills which all staff must attend.

Tomorrow's Doctors introduces the concept of student assistantships which are new placements undertaken before a student enters 'Foundation 1' as a trainee doctor. They will help students to become more effective in using their knowledge and skills in clinical environments such as a hospital or community setting and to understand practical tasks such as filling in a prescription form or ordering a blood sample. Student assistants will assist a junior doctor, become familiar with the workplace and undertake supervised procedures.

Graduation is an early threshold in doctor's careers. We do not expect new graduates to have the clinical experience, specialist expertise or leadership skills of a consultant or GP. But they must be able to demonstrate all the outcomes in Tomorrow's Doctors in order to be properly prepared for clinical practice and the Foundation Programme. The Foundation Programme builds on undergraduate education, allowing new doctors to demonstrate performance in the workplace.

The outcomes set out what the GMC expects medical schools to deliver and what the employers of new graduates can expect to receive although medical schools are free to require their graduates to demonstrate additional competences. These outcomes mark the end of the first stage of a continuum of medical learning that runs from the first day at medical school and continues until the doctor's retirement from clinical practice.

It is clear that meeting these outcomes and standards will be challenging and there are implications for resources and priorities both for medical schools and for the health service. But the benefit will be a further enhancement of the knowledge, skills and behaviour which new graduates will bring to their practice.

Tomorrow's Doctors will be implemented over the next two years and will apply from 2011-2012. For further information please visit [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org)

**Author:**  
Professor Jim McKillop,  
Chair of GMC  
Undergraduate Board

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