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Enriching a medical curriculum with community-based public health projects: are there opportunities for inter-professional learning?

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Enriching a medical curriculum with community-based public health projects: are there opportunities for inter-professional learning?

Abstract

The University of Wollongong graduate-entry medical course embeds research and critical analysis within the curriculum, concluding with the students designing and undertaking a 12-month regional/ rural community-based research project.

Keywords

public, health, enriching, projects, medical, there, opportunities, inter, professional, learning, curriculum, community

Disciplines

Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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SPEAKER PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS (CONT)

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Title: Enriching a Medical Curriculum with Community-Based Public Health Projects: are there Opportunities for Inter-Professional Learning?

Dr Judy Mullan, Kathryn Weston

Background

The University of Wollongong graduate-entry medical course embeds research and critical analysis within the curriculum, concluding with the students designing and undertaking a 12-month regional/rural community-based research project.

Purpose

This study aimed to investigate the opportunities for inter-professional learning arising from medical student research projects directly relating to public health issues in regional communities.

Questions for exploration

Do community-based student projects provide an opportunity for value adding in learning about public health issues in a regional and rural setting? Do these opportunities extend beyond the students to include practice staff, university academics and others?

Results

Analysis of the 217 research projects topics undertaken by the first three medical student cohorts revealed that over 70% (n=153) related directly to key public health priority areas as listed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, including; cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and mental health. Other public health issues investigated included; infant and women's health, vaccination and communicable disease.

Discussion

All students successfully completed a community-based research project within the medical curriculum. These projects also allowed GP preceptors, academic staff, members of the community and practice staff to engage at various levels in public health issues and research.

Conclusions

Public health is a consistent theme of interest for medical students in regional/rural practice. Undertaking a community-based research project within a medical curriculum helps to develop research-readiness among graduating doctors and also provides opportunities for inter-professional learning and exposure to public health issues.