



# Understanding Medical Education

**EVIDENCE, THEORY AND PRACTICE**

EDITED BY

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 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**



**ASME**

Association for the Study of Medical Education

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# **Understanding Medical Education**

## **Evidence, Theory and Practice**

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# Foreword

Education and learning have always been important parts of medicine-how we learn, how we assist learning and how we can best continue to learn, are all components of the process. Over the centuries these processes have changed radically; from essentially book learning and observation, to the introduction of anatomy and the formal study of the human body, through the development of the process of clinical examination, backed up by pathology to the beginning of laboratory work.

The complexity of modern medicine has added a much greater dimension to the learning. As the determinants of disease become clearer so the range of topics to cover and understand grows. Thus in addition to understanding the molecular basis of illness there is a need to consider social and economic issues in determining health, lifestyle choices, and the environment, and the wider public health.

How do we put all of this together? How do we develop a curriculum? How much needs to be learned at each stage of the process? And how do we assess the progress of the student and doctor? How do we ensure that we keep practice up to date and that continuing learning becomes an in built part of medical practice? How do we build it into our genes? How can we use the new learning technologies such as e-learning and simulation to best effect?

In addition to all of this we have seen a resurgence of interest in education itself and real wish to understand more fully the principles and practices involved. This requires the development of research tools and methods of assessment if we are to take learning to an even higher plane.

Patients, and the public, are central to this, in two ways. First and foremost, the purpose of all of this is to help

patients and their families deal with illness, the consequences of the diagnosis and the effects of treatment. Communication skills are key to this. The role of the doctor is to act as a healer and this requires a wide range of skills which are regularly updated and reviewed. Patients also point the way for us in the aspects of clinical practice.

The second role of the patient is to help the student or the doctor in the learning process. Increasingly patients give their time and skills to help us do better and we should recognise how much they contribute the education of the profession.

This splendid book covers these topics and many more. It makes the process of learning and assessment readily accessible and should stimulate new ideas and better ways of improving the care we give to patients and the public.

Sir Kenneth C. Calman  
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