

MALAYSIAN INTERNSHIP A REFLECTION OF UNDERGRADUATE TRAINING: TIME TO GO BACK TO BASICS

Dr SC Chan's comprehensive study on the adequacy of undergraduate clinical skills of Malaysian interns makes for interesting reading and has important implications.⁽¹⁾ The vast discrepancy between the interns' perception and that of their supervisors across the entire spectrum of skills assessed suggests a worrying lack of insight among newly qualified doctors. A realistic awareness of one's capabilities and limitations is fundamental to safe clinical practice and is an essential prerequisite for the pursuit of further postgraduate specialist training.

Local institutions and providers of undergraduate medical training should take notice of the findings of this survey, which suggests that many graduates are poorly equipped to meet the service needs of everyday, real-life clinical practice. Deficiencies must be identified and appropriate changes made accordingly in order to raise the standards of undergraduate education. Failure to do so is irresponsible and may result in a future generation of substandard doctors with potentially grave consequences.

A plethora of medical schools now exist in Malaysia, with a recent proliferation in the past decade or so, resulting in an annual production of an estimated three to four thousands doctors. Unsurprisingly, much concern has been expressed about the calibre of many junior doctors from these various institutions. An internship is, in essence, an apprenticeship during which theoretical knowledge, bedside manners and both clinical and non-clinical communication skills can be acquired and enhanced; however, this may be curtailed by the current high ratio of interns to specialist supervisors, which makes meaningful teaching and mentoring of junior doctors increasingly difficult and less reliable. Medical educationists must thoughtfully incorporate into the undergraduate curriculum some of the suggested improvements, including more communication skills workshops and hands-on experience on the wards, especially traditional bedside teaching.

Yours sincerely,

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REFERENCES

1. Chan SC. Views of Malaysian interns and their supervisors on the adequacy of undergraduate clinical skills training. Singapore Med J 2012; 53:196-202.