

## **MedEd Conference: Gen X and Y prompt review of medical training**

Medical graduates' desire for work-life balance and greater flexibility in working hours has prompted a rethink of how doctors are trained, delegates to Australia's biennial conference on medical education will hear this week.

The delegates to MedEd2007 – Australia's leading medical education conference, organised by Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand will discuss the implications of social and generational change on future medical practice and recommend strategies to address them.

Associate Professor Simon Willcock, who will co-convene MedEd 2007's 'Making and Sustaining Good Doctors' discussion says perceptions exist that recent medical graduates lack the work ethic of their predecessors.

"It has been suggested that junior doctors make career choices based on pragmatic factors, such as income expectations, working hours, length of training time and availability of part-time work, with sense of vocation being a secondary consideration," Associate Professor Willcock says.

However young doctors have also grown up in an era where it is no longer the norm to accept traditional hierarchical systems without challenge, and where technical literacy has significantly altered the methods of delivering medical education, he says. "Work ethic is influenced by globalisation and the information economy, and there is a desire for work-life balance, an informal work environment and negotiated supervision, all of which contrast starkly with traditional work practices in the health system, which are based on a rigid, hierarchical model which actively promotes the postponement of personal need."

There is acknowledgment by some providers of medical training that it is no longer possible to recruit and train undergraduates and new medical graduates and expect them to participate in traditional training and career pathways, Associate Professor Willcock says. "In an era when there is a shortage in the medical workforce, those disciplines and institutions that recognise and adapt their education and training systems accordingly will be more successful in adapting to change than those that adhere to established mechanisms."

This adaptation would extend past clinical skills training to include the teaching and reinforcement of professional skills, including interpersonal negotiation, time management, personal health strategies and skills in education and supervision, he says. "Acquisition of these skills reduces professional burnout and negative psychosocial health outcomes in medical practitioners, improves retention rates within the profession, and enhances standards of patient care."

Representatives from the peak industry bodies including the Australian Medical Students Association, Committee of Presidents of Australian Medical Colleges, Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils, the Department of Health and Ageing and Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand will participate in the MedEd 2007 discussions.

MedEd 2007 is being held at the Grand Hyatt Melbourne from 11-13 April.

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