

FLEXNER REPORT

OVERVIEW

- Study of medical education
- Written by Abraham Flexner
- Published in 1910 as *Bulletin No. 4* of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

HIISTORY

- In the late 19th century a modern medicine emerged
 - Antiseptic surgery
 - Scientific method
 - Evidence-based medicine
 - Clinical trials
- 1904 – AMA created the Council on Medical Education (CME)
 - Objective
 - Restructure American medical education
- 1908 – The CME asked the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to survey American medical education
 - Elimination of medical schools that failed to meet CME's standards
 - Abraham Flexner conducted this survey
 - Flexner visited the 155 medical schools in the US and Canada
 - All differed in curricula, methods of assessment, and requirements for admission and graduation.
 - "Each day students were subjected to interminable lectures and recitations. After a long morning of dissection or a series of quiz sections, they might sit wearily in the afternoon through three or four or even five lectures delivered in methodical fashion by part-time teachers. Evenings were given over to reading and preparation for recitations. If fortunate enough to gain entrance to a hospital, they observed more than participated." The Report became notorious for its harsh description of certain establishments, for example describing Chicago's 14 medical schools as "a disgrace to the State whose laws permit its existence... indescribably foul... the plague spot of the nation."
 - Several schools received praise for excellent performance
 - Johns Hopkins
 - It was described as 'model of medical education'
 - Harvard

- Western Reserve
- McGill, University of Toronto

BACKGROUND

- Flexner visited 155 medical schools in US and Canada in 1909-10
- Focus on:
 - Students
 - Curriculum,
 - Faculty quality
 - Laboratories
 - Clinical
 - Training and sites
 - Finance
 - Governance

CHANGES

Using the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine as the ideal, Flexner recommended that:

- Admission to a medical school should require
 - a high school diploma and,
 - at least two years of college or university study.
- The length of medical education be four years, and its content should be decided by the CME.
- Proprietary medical schools should either close or be incorporated into existing universities.
- Medical schools should appoint full-time clinical professors.

IMPACT

- Higher admission and graduation standards
- Adherence to protocols of mainstream science
 - 60% of American medical schools fell short of the standard and were closed.
- It concluded that there were too many medical schools in the US
 - Reversion of American universities to male-only admittance programs to accommodate a smaller admission pool
- Strengthen state oversight
- Faculty should engage in research
- Practitioners should be scientists
- Full-time clinical faculty
- Medical school-hospital clinical ties
- Complete redesign of curriculum, training, finances, faculty roles and compensation, clinical experiences and links between medical schools and hospitals
- Growth of science

- Gradual contemporary emergence of the university as center of teaching, learning and research
- Renewed emphasis on state licensure to control entry and regulate conditions of practice
- Changing role of hospitals

CONSEQUENCES OF THE REPORT

- A physician receives at least six, and preferably eight, years of post-secondary formal instruction
- Medical training adheres closely to the scientific method
- Average physician quality has increased significantly
- No medical school can be created without the permission of the state government.
 - The size of existing medical schools is subject to state regulation
- The annual number of medical school graduates declined
- Restriction of the supply of physicians, and rising of the incomes of the remaining practitioners.
- The report created a single model of medical education
 - *"An education in medicine," wrote Flexner, "involves both learning and learning how; the student cannot effectively know, unless he knows how." Flexner.*
 - *..."the physician as a social instrument... whose function is fast becoming social and preventive, rather than individual and curative."*
- The number of American medical schools was reduced to 31
 - The number of medical graduates was cut from 4,400 to 2,000
- In 1935 there were 66 medical schools
- Implementation of the university-based medical education model
 - Medical education became much more expensive
- The Report tended to delegitimize existing women doctors and doctors of color.
- Domination of American medicine by well-off white males.
- Elimination of alternative medicine courses from the curriculum

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