



**Unexpected change makers: the need for medical learner education on hospital governance**  
**Artisans du changement inattendus : le besoin d'initier les étudiants en médecine à la gestion hospitalière**

Michael H Lee, Matthew W Nelms and Ali Damji

Volume 13, Number 3, 2022

Special Issue on Change in Medical Education

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091026ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.75110>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Medical Education Journal

ISSN

1923-1202 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Lee, M., Nelms, M. & Damji, A. (2022). Unexpected change makers: the need for medical learner education on hospital governance. *Canadian Medical Education Journal / Revue canadienne de l'éducation médicale*, 13(3), 116–117. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.75110>

© Michael H Lee, Matthew W Nelms, Ali Damji, 2022



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

## Unexpected change makers: the need for medical learner education on hospital governance

### Artisans du changement inattendus : le besoin d'initier les étudiants en médecine à la gestion hospitalière

Michael H Lee,<sup>1</sup> Matthew W Nelms,<sup>1</sup> Ali Damji<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Medical Student, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada; <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Correspondence to: Michael H. Lee; email: [michaelh.lee@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:michaelh.lee@mail.utoronto.ca); Twitter: @michaelhylee

Published ahead of issue: June 24, 2022; published on July 6, 2022. CMEJ 2022, 13(3). Available at <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.75110>

© 2022 Lee, Nelms, Damji; licensee Synergies Partners. This is an Open Journal Systems article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Many medical learners are passionate to create positive change in the clinical environment and beyond. In many cases, they are encouraged to participate in micro-level changes (patient advocacy, communication, and social support) that can be accomplished in short time frames and within their control, as opposed to larger macro-level changes (organizational policy and protocol redesign).

University of Toronto's MD program regularly includes teaching on the Canadian healthcare system structure and funding.<sup>1</sup> However, as is common across many schools, material focused on hospital structure and governance is scarce. Indeed, quality improvement (QI) initiatives are embedded in the curriculum but when medical learners enter a hospital setting, there is a disconnect between theoretical QI implementation in microsystems, and process-levels decision making (e.g., quality committee and board meetings).

With the increasing complexity of the healthcare system, physicians need to be expert navigators—constantly adapting to management structure changes, budget updates and even political cycles for healthcare funding priorities—in addition to their clinical responsibilities. We need to be aware of where, how and by whom policy and governance decisions are being made to do well by our patients. A study of seven OECD countries, revealed that the degree of involvement of physicians in hospital governance positively correlated with that of hospital performance indicators (quality improvement, better

patient outcomes and lower costs).<sup>2</sup> While this is only an association, medical students can be better prepared for physician-leadership and effective management when they understand the governance, culture, and organizational strategy.<sup>3</sup>

We did not find any published articles regarding undergraduate medical student education concerning hospital governance. However, some researchers examined the effectiveness of including content aimed at increasing student knowledge in specific areas outside the traditional curriculum.<sup>4,5</sup> This then raises the question: "As a result of the lack of formal training on hospital administration, how confident do medical students feel about raising their patient safety and quality care concerns to the correct individual in the hospital leadership world?" Nonetheless, this highlights a potential avenue to increase medical student knowledge regarding specific content.

Appropriate undergraduate medical education is not a silver bullet. It would serve to provide increased knowledge of hospital governance and management, providing learners with the opportunity to serve as vital agents of change at an organizational level. Students often come from diverse undergraduate backgrounds, levels of education and experience, and due to the traditional medical hierarchy, their creative insight into resolving macro-level issues may go unnoticed by culture-bound clinicians and administrators. Medical education may promote a quality improvement mindset and foster

hospital-physician intrapreneurs who create user-defined values. It is the very essence of medical students being at the bottom of the traditional hierarchy that makes them an ideal target for effective intervention. By gradually introducing education at the beginning of medical training, these future physicians will have increased learning experiences and understanding of the complexity of the healthcare system, as opposed to introducing such topics towards the end of residency training. Explicit education rather than serendipitous learning from the hidden curriculum offers the opportunity to proactively shape their understanding and ability to make an impact. Moreover, this knowledge may supplement trainees' ability to function more optimally in the increasingly complex system as trainees.

What we conclude from current studies is that at a minimum, learning about hospital structure and governance will likely increase awareness. We need further research to identify the most effective way of delivering this information; however, we can rely on the groundwork of similar work as a road map to move forward. Canadian medical school curricula do not include hospital governance and leadership roles. If students are even briefly taught organizational structure and the roles of leadership (e.g., CEO and vice presidents, directors) in a hospital or larger system setting, they would be better equipped to collaborate with other like-minded agents of change with a larger network—ultimately optimizing how they work in the system and enhancing their career opportunities. Imagine if they learned more! Empowering medical students to improve the system begins with developing their understanding of the system through an effective curriculum and engaging them in experiential governance activities. Only then can they more effectively advocate for improved patient care in a stronger healthcare system, maximizing their potential as agents of change.

**Conflicts of Interest:** None.

**Funding:** None.

**Authorship:** Authors Lee and Nelms contributed equally to this work.

**Acknowledgements:** The authors wish to thank Dr. Ali Damji of the University of Toronto.

## References

1. Foundations Curriculum. *MD program*. April 16, 2021. Available at <https://md.utoronto.ca/foundations-curriculum>. [Accessed May 25, 2021.]
2. Rotar AM, Botje D, Klazinga NS, et al. The involvement of medical doctors in hospital governance and implications for quality management: a quick scan in 19 and an in depth study in 7 OECD countries. *BMC health serv res*. 2016 May;16(2):99-109. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-016-1396-4>
3. Goodall AH, Stoller JK, Bäker A. Why the best hospitals are managed by doctors. *Harvard Business Review*. 2016 Dec 27.
4. Parameshwaran V, Cockbain BC, Hillyard M, Price JR. Is the lack of specific lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) health care education in medical school a cause for concern? Evidence from a survey of knowledge and practice among UK medical students. *J Homosex*. 2017 Feb 23;64(3):367-81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1190218>
5. D'Urzo KA, Flood SM, Baillie C, et al. Evaluating the implementation and impact of a motivational interviewing workshop on medical student knowledge and social cognitions towards counseling patients on lifestyle behaviors. *Teach Learn Med*. 2020 Mar 14;32(2):218-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2019.1681273>