COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Final Report on University Teaching and Development Grant

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Project Title

A study into the role of personal qualities and experiences in informing a professional sense of social accountability in medical students

Project Team

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The research question this study aims to address
This study asks the question: "Is there a set of personal qualities and experiences in medical students entering medicine that may equip some of them with a keener sense of *social accountability*[1] such that these students may be more likely to base their future practice in presently *underserved communities*[2]?" Secondly, if such a set of characteristics does exist, to what extent is the present UMAT entry exam able to identify them?

Methods
The present study comprises part one of a two-phase 10-year longitudinal study, which has full Category A ethics approval from the University of Otago alongside Māori consultation. It consisted in 2013, of the administration of pre-validated voluntariness and personality inventory surveys, together with selected demographic questions to a whole class cohort of second year medical students (286 students with a 77% response rate). Student answers in the voluntariness portion of the survey allowed for students to be divided into four groups where responses indicated their underlying reason(s) for volunteering as:

1. Benefitting principally the self
2. Benefitting principally others
3. Benefitting self and others equally

Group 4 consisted of students who responded that they did not engage (and had not previously engaged) in volunteering.

The twenty students who scored the highest in the survey for each of the above 4 groups were identified and sent an invitation to take part in a focus group (focus group and some individual interviews eventually boosted numbers in each group to between 5 and 10 students). The focus groups served to explore further students' reasons/inspirations for becoming a doctor, to hear more of the nature of their volunteering and reasons for volunteering (or not – group 4), to enquire as to in which

discipline and where they thought their practice may eventually be centred (and why they thought this would be a good choice for them); and finally to hear what these students would most want to be remembered for in terms of their medical practice at the time of their retirement.

Outcomes

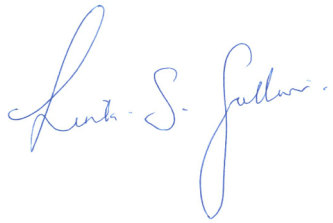
Data from the focus groups is presently being collated alongside quantitative data produced from the whole class cohort with view to publishing phase 1 results in a high-quality peer-reviewed journal by December 2014. Permission to access UMAT scores and relevant material has been obtained. An interesting preliminary finding from the focus groups has been that students in group 4 perceived "volunteering" as being part of an organized and/or group activity, thus most of the students who participated in group 4 were also volunteers but of a different genre (e.g. caring for a disabled sibling, mentoring young musicians), viewing their input as " their role, normal, expected, just what you do".

Phase 2 of the research will consist of an interview with all focus group and interview participants at the completion of year 4 in Advanced Learning in Medicine Years 4-6 (ALM) 2015, and two post-graduate interviews spaced 5 years apart thereafter (2018 and 2023). Second and subsequent surveys may also be considered for the whole class cohort at these times. It is only in completing longitudinal analysis that we will be able to assess if sets of attributes and experiences identified in medical students in phase 1 of the study, do actually play a role in influencing career direction and a willingness by some doctors to work with more *underserved communities*.

Implications

This information could be used in selecting future students who are more likely to work with underserved populations. It may also provide important information on whether current entry selection processes identify the type of students needed to serve the increasing needs of those from poorer, isolated and deprived populations.

Summary of spending

Please see attached documents.

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