Advancing Medical Education in Greater China

Building on its pioneering roots, the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine has set the pace for recent medical education reform in Hong Kong and is now sharing its leading experience with other institutions in the region.

As Programme Director for China Partnership in IMHSE, Professor Chan has established extensive links between the Faculty and institutions in Greater China. “Along with problem-based learning, medical schools in the region have a keen interest in curriculum management,” Professor Chan said. “It is not an easy task when elements such as student assessment, new teacher training, evaluation and monitoring, and community-based teaching are compounded into the management of teaching and learning.”

The Faculty runs annual workshops for medical educators in areas such as integration of basic and clinical sciences, management of problem-based learning, case writing and tutor training for problem-based learning, professional skills training, assessment principles and question writing, Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE), and quality assurance of medical curricula. It also offers various attachment programmes and a certificate course tailored for aspiring medical educators. Course objectives encompass many of the principles distilled from the teaching philosophies developed from the 1997 reform, providing insights and hands-on experience in curriculum design and planning.

How does the Faculty advance through these collaborations? “The exchange sessions have brought us closer to other medical academies in Greater China and opened up numerous opportunities beneficial to education,” Professor Lau said. “The large population and variety of patients in the region enable us to learn more about the behaviour of Chinese patients and foster research synergy. More educational joint research could also be done to refine ways of teaching further.”

Enhancing knowledge

The Institute of Medical and Health Sciences Education (IMHSE), which was established in 2004, is the main driver in sharing the Faculty’s experience with other medical schools in Greater China. “It is our hope that the Faculty could play a part in having a positive influence on undergraduate education in the region,” Professor Lau Chak Sing (劉澤星), Director of IMHSE, said. “In 2010 alone, eight of the top Mainland medical schools visited the Faculty to learn about our medical curriculum.” A total of 12 training workshops were organised for about 30 delegates in 2010, covering topics from running small group problem-based learning tutorials to writing paper cases as tools for teaching and learning. The delegates also gained first-hand experience by attending tutorial sessions at the Faculty.

Many others in the Greater China region have benefited from such exposure to the Faculty’s approach to education in recent years. Since 2005, more than 50 training workshops have been organised for over 260 educators and healthcare professionals, from institutions including Fudan University, Harbin Medical University, Peking University, and Shenzhen University.

In the past five years, IMHSE has received more than 30 delegations from the Greater China region and members of IMHSE have also frequently visited institutions in Greater China. Knowledge exchange with local academics and students on these visits takes the form of lectures, tutorials and mini-workshops. On other occasions, members have staged “road-shows of what we have experienced”, as Professor Chan Ying Shing (陳應城), Associate Dean of Academic Networking and Student Affairs, termed it.

Closer links

“ “It is our hope that the Faculty could play a part in having a positive influence on undergraduate education in the region.”"
In addition, the large number of medical graduates from collaborating institutions in Greater China will allow IMHSE to carry out wider reflective assessment on the effectiveness of the teaching philosophies of HKU’s Medical Faculty.

Professor Chan also emphasised the opportunities for student exchange created through IMHSE’s network with medical schools in Greater China. “It is essential for our students to know about medical systems in the region.” He sees great potential for students to gain such exposure, especially through the Self-Study Module, a part of the undergraduate curriculum that dispenses an annual dose of extra-curricular learning.

Moving forward together

As the Faculty aspires to stay at the forefront of medical teaching, research and patient care in the region, its efforts in sharing will undoubtedly prove worthwhile as the next generation of doctors expand their vision through closer connections with regional peers. At the same time, such sharing can advance medical education in Greater China overall. Indeed, the ripples from Sassoon Road today can spur the waves of change for tomorrow’s healthcare in the region.

Establishing Connections

Some of the Greater China institutions* collaborating with the Faculty:

- Fourth Military Medical University, Xi’an
- Fudan University
- Harbin Medical University
- Kaohsiung Medical University
- National Yang-Ming University, Taipei
- Peking Union Medical College
- Peking University
- Second Military Medical University, Shanghai
- Shanghai Jiaotong University
- Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Sichuan University
- Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou
- Tsinghua University
- Zhejiang University

* listed in alphabetical order

The School of Nursing has also been collaborating with tertiary institutions in Greater China, organising student exchange programmes involving over 70 local, Mainland and Taiwan students each year. Collaborating universities include Fudan University, Peking University, Sun-Yat-sen University and Kaohsiung Medical University.

In recent years, the School of Chinese Medicine has been strengthening collaboration in teaching, research and academic exchange with renowned institutions in Mainland China. This includes arranging for final-year students to attend a 40-week internship in Mainland universities such as Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine. It has arranged for three to four students each year to undertake academic exchange at Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Starting from last year, the School has also been organising exchange camps with Beijing University of Chinese Medicine.

More information about IMHSE, its programmes and collaborations in Greater China is available at www.hku.hk/facmed/imhse.
Medical education, regardless of whether it is in Mainland China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, shares common goals and interests. Given similar cultural backgrounds and education systems, the increase in inter-region communication and collaboration will no doubt strengthen ongoing efforts to promote medical education reform in East Asia. I believe the dialogue between Peking University Health Science Center and HKU Medical Faculty provides a great platform for sharing experiences and inspiring discussion for innovations in medical education for Chinese students. These involve curriculum design and development, written and practical assessment, and “student and peer” evaluation. I truly believe such collaborative efforts will be beneficial to both parties and will facilitate the on-going pre-clinical medical education system reform at Peking University Health Science Center, whose ultimate goal is to groom outstanding medical students and provide them with the necessary tools and skills to contribute to the medical world.”

Professor Youfei Guan (管又飛)
Associate Dean, School of Basic Medical Sciences
Peking University Health Science Center

In 2008, 10 of our faculty members with different academic backgrounds spent one week at HKU Medical Faculty. Through participating in different activities, including lectures, discussions, observations of tutorials, all of them gained deeper understanding of the PBL concept and acquired basic skills in tutoring, case writing, feedback provision and assessment. The PBL tutor training workshops provided by IMHSE were intensive and professional. Our members were also deeply impressed by the active learning atmosphere, positive attitude and participation of students, as well as the experienced tutors at HKU.”

Dr Wang Qing (汪青)
Associate Professor
Medical Education Research Unit
Shanghai Medical College
Fudan University
"I have helped us in developing a new course on self-directed learning. During my visit to HKU in September 2010, Dr. Philip Beh introduced his elective course to me in great detail. We then created a new course on quality assessment and quality improvement for our undergraduate medical students last semester. Students were asked to work on a team assignment regarding quality improvement, with the tutor invited to facilitate during the brainstorming and strategy setting. All the students who participated enjoyed it very much and the course received positive feedback. On my last visit to HKU in December 2010, Dr. Julie Chen also shared with me her experiences in clinical faculty development. After the visit, we launched a number of creative faculty development courses at our university. Through ongoing and mutual sharing of experiences in curriculum design, I believe our university and HKU will continue to have fruitful achievements in the years to come."

Professor Yang Ling-Yu (楊令瑀)
Head, Department of Pediatrics
National Yang-Ming University, Taipei

"There is increasing interest in Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in medical education in Greater China. However, PBL is an educational philosophy rather than an independent tool. The adoption of PBL has ramifying implications that require careful consideration of the curriculum structure, availability of facilitators, faculty development, case production, allocation of spaces, and various other factors. Our Faculty gained experience in PBL following reform of the MBBS curriculum in 1997 and now we are sharing our experiences with schools in the region. Professor YS Chan and I visited Guangzhou Medical University in March 2010, and held a PBL workshop. We invited some of their medical students to take part in a PBL session in Putonghua. This gave them their first PBL experience while their teachers were able to observe. Thus, enthusiasm spread not only among the teachers, but also the participating students."

Dr Chan Lap Ki (陳立基)
Associate Professor
Institute of Medical and Health Sciences Education and Department of Anatomy