

NEW & Noteworthy

UPDATES ON ACTIVITIES IN THE PROFESSION

Ushering in the Institute for Excellence in Osteopathic Medical Education

A burgeoning movement to reevaluate the way physicians are educated has both osteopathic and allopathic medical education associations reviewing the educational offerings of their member colleges to determine the match, or mismatch, between the content and processes that are used to educate physicians and the changing nature of the healthcare system. One of the broad aims of the Institute for Excellence in Osteopathic Medical Education of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) is to facilitate that exploration and subsequent changes.

The concept of the institute was introduced by its director, Douglas L. Wood, DO, PhD, President of AACOM, in March 2001 to AACOM's Council of Deans and Board of Governors.

The four goals of the institute are to (1) promote, develop, and support best

educational practices; (2) provide resources to support medical education; (3) facilitate multi-institutional medical education research; and (4) provide career development and mentoring for faculty and staff.

Accessing the virtual institute

A highly interactive World Wide Web site will serve as a portal to the institute's educational services for medical educators and students, with links to resources related to specific areas of interest. Interactions that occur within the virtual institute will lead to face-to-face encounters in which educators will overcome obstacles; plan collaborative research; and develop strategies to implement best practices that address the issues of a changing healthcare system, increasingly knowledgeable healthcare consumers, and the opportunities of modern technology.

GOALS of the Institute for Excellence in Osteopathic Medical Education

- 1 Promote, develop, and support best educational practices
- 2 Provide resources to support medical education
- 3 Facilitate multi-institutional medical education research
- 4 Provide career development and mentoring for faculty and staff

Inclusive direction

An advisory group is currently guiding development of the institute. Plans are under way for the establishment in 2002 of an AACOM Council of Medical Education representing each college of osteopathic medicine.

As student involvement is a critical element in the overall success of the institute, AACOM's Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents will also participate in the leadership of the institute. Working with faculty, students will develop skills in mentoring and teaching as training for becoming future faculty.

Elevating the status of educators

Fundamental to the move toward excellence in osteopathic medical education is

the status of every faculty member's role as teacher. Unfortunately, faculty members often allow their role as educators to take a backseat to their roles as researchers and clinical practitioners because teaching is not rewarded at their institutions. To combat the emphasis on research and clinical matters, a few medical schools have gone beyond traditional faculty development programs to establish academies to raise the status of teaching (notable are the academies at the University of California in San Francisco, Calif, and Harvard University in Boston, Mass.) Other medical schools have established systems to track faculty activity so that it can be linked to pay and promotion. AACOM's institute will highlight the contributions of osteopathic medical school faculty and facilitate problem questions regarding the status of teachers at our colleges.

Web site features

As the Web site for the institute is developed, educational services will be intro-

duced through AACOM's current Web site at www.aacom.org/education. These services will take on a more dynamic and personalized format when the virtual institute is fully developed. The following are the services that will become available during the coming months.

■ **Journal reviews**—Available now through the education page of AACOM's Web site are recommended articles and links to abstracts with annotations from medical education literature from the following journals: *JAOA—The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*, *Medical Teacher*, *Medical Educator*, *Teaching and Learning in Medical Education*, *Academic Medicine*, *Basic Science Educator*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and the *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Medical educators are encouraged to submit brief reviews of articles of interest from other journals.

■ **Directory of medical education consultants and innovations**—This directory will enable faculty at colleges of osteopathic medicine to have access to peers for consultation, while becoming informed about educational practices that advance the teaching of osteopathic medicine.

■ **Medical education research database**—By either joining or providing a parallel structure to AACOM's current clinical research database at <http://www.aacom.org/Research-Database/Index.cfm>, the institute will review medical educational research to determine the best medical education practices.

■ **User-friendly skill development resources**—The institute's Web site will link to a variety of resources that faculty and students can use in planning, facilitating, and assessing adult learning.

The Health Professions Education Scholar Program

The Health Professions Education Scholar Program will be fully developed by spring 2002, as a resource to develop educator skills. Guided by experts in adult learning theory, participants will complete individual modules leading to certification in areas that include the following:

- Developing a personal working philosophy to guide teaching and learning in health professions education;
- Facilitating learning in a traditional classroom setting that is learner-centered;
- Improving outcomes through the use of active learning strategies;
- Developing and implementing instruction to meet special program needs, including clinical teaching, problem-based learning, and distance learning;
- Student assessment and classroom research; and
- Promoting teaching and learning excellence by developing an integrated, scholarly approach to education, leadership innovation, and change.

The Health Professions Education Scholar Program provides abundant information, as well as a faculty center with access to news groups and chat rooms; updates on AACOM's Teaching Excellence Development Program; and a resource center with a central database of all resources cited in AACOM's Education Scholar Program that will be available at <http://www.educationscholar.org/index.htm>. Staff at AACOM, as well as a growing number of osteopathic medical educators, is working to create of this innovative institute to enhance excellence in our education programs and develop the faculty of the future.

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