A Reply to: Internationalization of Medical Education—Building a Program to Prepare Future Leaders in Healthcare

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Published online: 9 June 2020

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Dear editor,

We read with great interest the article by Wu et al. [1], discussing their experience in designing and implementing an international programme for preclinical medical students.

As medical students at King's College London, we invite such initiatives that allow collaboration with our counterparts in other countries, to learn about their healthcare systems and global health issues. Furthermore, international programmes allow the development of cultural competence, establish foundations for future international partnerships and introduce further opportunities for students' professional development. We applaud this initiative, as from our experiences, such opportunities are scarce. Within the medical curriculum, the only opportunity of gaining international clinical experience is through an elective. This takes place in the final year of the students' medical studies and is arranged by the students themselves. Yet, there are no opportunities within the course for such endeavours at a preclinical level. Although there are extra-curricular summer programmes and international courses, these often have significant financial costs, making them inaccessible for a large proportion of the cohort. However, the structure of the programme described by the authors and the use of video conferencing allow students to reap the rewards of international programmes, without a financial burden.

The author mentions the multitude of benefits achieved through the international programme, such as the facilitation of cultural exchange. However, we believe that the aims of the programme would be better achieved, if it were to be opened to students of different healthcare disciplines. This will allow international dialogue as well as interprofessional education (IPE), preparing students for multidisciplinary team working in

clinical settings. IPE has been shown to not only facilitate knowledge but also form positive attitudes and appreciation of other healthcare roles [2, 3]. This mirrors our experience at King's College London. Medical students are enrolled on an IPE course from first year, which involves students of different healthcare disciplines including nursing, midwifery and physiotherapy, at various stages of their training to collaborate on a group project. We have found these experiences useful in learning about different healthcare disciplines and also understanding their perspective on various matters. Needless to say, these opportunities allow personal development: the strengthening of communication skills and team working between individuals of different professions. Therefore, to gain these benefits, in addition to those of an international programme, we suggest the authors to explore the possibility of opening up this programme to other healthcare students to create an interdisciplinary international programme.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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