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Foreword



With this publication, WHO issues its first guidelines for 'Transforming and Scaling up Health Professionals' Education and Training'. The guidelines are expected to give rise to regional and country based policy and technical dialogues with key stakeholders in education, health, finance and labour, on how best to finance health professionals' training and prepare health professionals for the 21st century.

The guidelines draw on the most recent evidence on what underpins the concept of transforming health professionals' education to frame the recommendations. The global health community has been made aware through reports, global meetings and policy dialogues, that there is a severe health workforce crisis in 57 countries globally as stated in the 2006 World Health Report. However these workforce shortages are by no means confined to the 57 countries most severely affected. In virtually every country, shortages have been accompanied by an imbalance in skill mix of teams and uneven geographical distribution of health professionals, leaving millions without access to health services.

More professional health workers are needed, but it has become clear that efforts to scale up health professionals' education must not only increase the quantity of health workers, but also address issues of quality and relevance in order to address population health needs. Educational institutions need to increase their capacity to teach in terms of infrastructure but also: improve the competencies of existing staff and increase their numbers; reform admissions criteria; strengthen health professionals' competencies by revising and updating curricula on a regular basis; and link the disease burden to training needs. For persons wishing to change careers mid-stream, or even students of other disciplines wishing to become health professionals, there should be pathways that make these changes possible. The international community has an important role to play by partnering in support of country-led efforts to achieve these reforms.

These recommendations should attract strong political commitment to regular and structured mechanisms for better collaboration between the education and health sectors, other national authorities and the private sector with the intent to improve the match between health professionals' education and the realities of health service delivery. There are therefore recommendations which address: political commitment to reform of health professionals' education; formal collaboration and shared accountability between ministries of health, education and other related ministries; linkage to a national planning process; and the creation or strengthening of national and sub-national institutions.

It is the intention that these guidelines spark many dialogues in the public and private sector, including non-governmental organizations and fuel a growing movement to tackle the challenges facing the professional health workforce and contribute to a new era for health professionals' education.

Dr Margaret Chan

Director-General
World Health Organization

Contributors and acknowledgments

These guidelines are part of the World Health Organization (WHO) programme on the Rapid Scaling Up of the Health Workforce. This programme is an essential component of WHO's efforts to support the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, strengthen health systems and achieve universal coverage in the context of primary health care.

These activities have been supported by Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO and Carissa Etienne, formerly Assistant Director-General for Health Systems and Services. Manuel M. Dayrit, Director, of the former Department of Human Resources of Health (HRH), Francesca Celletti formerly leading the guidelines development process and Rebecca Bailey of the former Department of Human Resources of Health and more recently by Mario Dal Poz, former Coordinator, HRH.

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The views expressed in these guidelines can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of PEPFAR, USAID, IntraHealth, CapacityPlus or any partners involved in their development.

Abbreviations

CGDG	Core Guidelines Development Group
CPD	Continuing professional development
GHWA	Global Health Workforce Alliance
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation
HRH	<i>Human resources for health</i>
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives
ICN	International Council of Nurses
MEPI	Medical Education Partnership Initiative
PEPFAR	The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PICO	Population/intervention/comparison/outcome
WFME	World Federation Medical Education
WHO	World Health Organization

Contents

Foreword	5
Contributors and acknowledgments	6
Abbreviations	8
Executive summary	11
Recommendations at a glance	13
1 Introductory chapters	15
1.1 Introduction	15
1.2 The domains for action: focus of the guidelines	16
1.3 Scope of the Guidelines	17
1.4 Methodology of Evidence-Informed Guidelines	17
1.5 Expected beneficiaries and benefits	19
1.6 Dissemination process	19
1.7 Conflicts of interest	20
1.8 Peer review process	20
1.9 The Guideline Development Group	20
1.10 Structure of the document	20
2 Transforming and scaling up health professionals' education and training: Why is it urgently needed?	21
3 Transforming and scaling up health professionals' education and training: What are the key policy issues and possible responses?	22
3.1 Education and training institutions	22
Key Policy Issue #1: Which competencies should students acquire?	23
Key Policy Issue #2: Which teaching and learning strategies are relevant?	23
Key Policy Issue #3: Which educators and trainers? Which career pathways?	24
3.2 Accreditation and regulation	24
Key Policy Issue #1: Why regulate practice and accredit courses?	24
Key Policy Issue #3: What is the right balance between regulation and autonomy of institutions?	25
Key Policy Issue #4: Who should regulate?	25
Key Policy Issue #5: How should the effectiveness of regulation be measured?	26
3.3 Financing and sustainability	26
Key Policy Issue #1: Estimating the costs of scaling up and their affordability	26
Key Policy Issue #2: Where will the money come from?	27
Key Policy Issue #3: Where should the money go?	27
Key Policy Issue #4: How to ensure a flow of funds that makes scaling up sustainable?	27
3.4 Monitoring, implementation and evaluation	28
Key Policy Issue #1: What to monitor, for what purpose, and how to do so?	28
Key Policy Issue #2: How to conduct monitoring and evaluation and who should be responsible?	28

Key Policy Issue #3: How to facilitate the utilization of information for policy development and implementation?	29
3.5 Governance and planning	29
Key Policy Issue #1: Will a national education plan to produce and retain graduates have an effect on quantity, quality and relevance?	29
Key Policy Issue #2: How to secure political commitment across political cycles, e.g. government change, substitution of ministers?	31
4. Recommendations to transform and scale up health professionals' education and training	32
4.1 Education and training institutions	33
Faculty development	33
Curriculum development	36
Simulation methods	37
Direct entry of graduates	38
Admissions procedures	39
Streamlined educational pathways and ladder programmes	41
Interprofessional education	42
4.2 Accreditation	46
Accreditation	46
4.3 Continuous professional development (CPD) for health professionals	48
4.4 Monitoring, implementation and evaluation	49
Monitoring health workforce supply and planning for the future	49
Monitoring certification rates	49
4.5 Good practice recommendations: Governance and planning	50
Good practice 1	50
Good practice 2	50
Good practice 3	50
Good practice 4	50
4.6 Civil society recommendations	51
5. Knowledge gaps and research agenda	52
5.1 Education and training institutions	52
5.2 Accreditation and regulation	52
5.3 Financing and sustainability	52
5.4 Monitoring, implementation and evaluation	53
5.5 Governance and planning	53
References	54
Annex 1. Definition and list of health professionals	57
Annex 2. List of terms used for graduate entry programmes	58
Annex 3. Final list of PICO questions	59
Annex 4. Glossary of intervention terms	61
Annex 5. The WHO guideline development process	64
Annex 6. Grade tables	66
Annex 7. Decision tables	77
Annex 8. Example of Systematic Review	103
Annex 9. Core Guidelines Development Group members	114
Annex 10. List of External Peer Reviewers	117
Annex 11. Working groups at the CGDG meeting, Washington, USA, March 2012	175
Annex 12. Systematic Reviews Team Leaders	177
Annex 13. Working groups at the Guidelines Development Group meeting, Washington, USA, March 2012	118
Annex 14. Outcomes Framework	122

Executive Summary

The World Health Report 2006 'Working Together for Health' pointed to an estimated 57 countries globally that have a critical shortage equivalent to a global deficit of 2.4 million doctors, nurses and midwives which by implication suggests millions of people worldwide who do not receive the essential health care and services that are desperately needed. Simply training and graduating more health professionals is not the answer to this vexing issue. Concerted and immediate efforts to transform and scale up health professionals' education are required to attain the right mix of skills and competencies of health professionals who can respond to the ever changing and evolving needs of populations around the world. Building on an approach of global collaborative leadership, efforts that are adaptive and flexible in various cultural and socio-economic settings will be key to the successful implementation of these evidence-informed guideline recommendations.

These guidelines call for new approaches in health professionals' education. Approaches are needed that transform systems and encourage the move away from the traditional focus on tertiary care hospitals to initiatives that foster community engagement. The guidelines recommendations support and advocate for implementation considerations in efforts to involve communities and countries collectively for this transformational change in health professionals' education. It is the intent of the Guidelines to encourage educational and training institutions to foster and enhance the relational activity and the interaction and planning between education, health and other sectors.

To achieve this transformational process, The WHO *Initiative on transforming and scaling up health professionals' education and training* becomes a major contribution to the challenging task of reshaping the health workforce of countries for the benefit and well-being of their citizens (Box 1).

Box 1. Defining transforming and scaling up health professionals' education

Transformative scaling up of health professionals' education and training is defined as the sustainable expansion and reform of health professionals' education and training to *increase the **quantity, quality and relevance** of health professionals, and in so doing strengthen the country health systems and improve population health outcomes.*

These guidelines set out a vision of such a transformation of education for the health professions, and offer recommendations on how best to achieve the goal of producing graduates responsive to the health needs of the populations they serve. Specifically, the guidelines aim to: provide sound policy and technical guidance in the area of pre-service education, particularly to countries experiencing shortages of doctors, nurses, midwives and other health professionals; and guide countries on how to integrate continuing professional development (CPD) as part of medical, nursing, midwifery and other health professionals' education scale-up in order to ensure excellence of care, responsive health service delivery and sustainable health systems. Country ownership in determining priorities and setting policy is required in each of the five identified guideline domains:

- 1) **Education and training institutions,**
- 2) **Accreditation, regulation,**
- 3) **Financing and sustainability,**
- 4) **Monitoring and evaluating, and**
- 5) **Governance and planning.**

The recommendations cover a wide range from development of community-engaged relevant curricula through to equipping health professionals with the skills to be high quality competent clinical teachers and academic faculty, all of which contribute to preparing high quality competent health graduates to practice in areas of need. Hence, a greater alignment between educational institutions and the health care system will be the necessary ingredient to bring about transformative change and leadership in preparing future graduates who have an affinity to work in rural and remote areas where the challenging issues of health equity and equality remain.

Box 2. The vision for transformative education

- Greater alignment is needed between educational institutions and the systems that are responsible for health service delivery.
- Country ownership of priorities and programming related to the education of health professionals with political commitment and partnerships to facilitate reform at national, regional and local levels.
- Promotion of social accountability in professional education and of close collaboration with communities.
- Clinicians and public health workers who are competent and provide the highest quality of care for individuals and communities.
- Global excellence coupled with local relevance in research and education.
- Vibrant and sustainable education institutions with dynamic curricula and supportive learning environments, including good physical infrastructure.
- Faculty of outstanding quality who are motivated and can be retained

Adapted from Celletti et al. (2011).

The guidelines deal with the complex issues for transforming health professionals' education through the presentation of key policy issues, summarizing available evidence and providing recommendations and a commentary, which includes guidance for implementation. This guidance is underpinned by good practice recommendations which provide a supportive context for implementation. The following section describes the twelve recommendations, which are a culmination of evidence-informed decision interventions to guide a focused transformational process of and for scaling up health professionals' education and training globally.

Recommendations to transform and scale up health professionals' education and training

Faculty development

Recommendation 1:

Health professionals' education and training institutions should consider designing and implementing continuous development programmes for faculty and teaching staff relevant to the evolving health-care needs of their communities.

The **quality of the evidence supporting these recommendations is moderate**, and the **strength of the recommendation is conditional**.

Recommendation 2:

Governments, funders and accrediting bodies should consider supporting the implementation of higher education policies for mandatory faculty development programmes that are relevant to the evolving health care needs of their communities.

The **quality of the evidence supporting these recommendations is low**, and the **strength of the recommendation is conditional**.

Recommendation 3:

Health professionals' education and training institutions should consider innovative expansion of faculty, through the recruitment of community-based clinicians and health workers as educators.

The **quality of the evidence supporting this recommendation is low**, and the **strength of the recommendation is conditional**.

Curriculum Development

Recommendation 4:

Health professionals' education and training institutions should consider adapting curricula to the evolving health-care needs of their communities.

The **quality of the evidence supporting this recommendation is low**, and the strength of the recommendation is conditional.

Simulation methods

Recommendation 5:

Health professionals' education and training institutions should use simulation methods (high fidelity methods in settings with appropriate resources and lower fidelity methods in resource limited settings) of contextually appropriate fidelity levels in the education of health professionals.

The **quality of the evidence supporting these recommendations is moderate**, and the **strength of the recommendation is strong**.

Direct entry of graduates

Recommendation 6:

Health professionals' education and training institutions should consider direct entry of graduates from relevant undergraduate, postgraduate or other educational programmes into different or other levels of professional studies.

The **quality of the evidence supporting this recommendation is moderate**, and the **strength of the recommendation is conditional**.