

## Planned products of the WHO/WFME strategic partnership:

- a shared database that will include up-to-date experience in implementing quality-improvement processes in medical schools;
- access, via the database, to information on specific schools and in particular to a description of their approach to quality improvement;
- promoting twinning between medical schools and other institutions in processes to foster innovative education;
- means to update the management of medical schools;
- identification and analysis, by WHO regions, of innovations in medical education in order to help define appropriate lines of work for each region;
- assistance to institutions or national/regional organizations and agencies to develop and implement reform programmes or establish recognition/accreditation systems;
- a review of good practices in medical education that can serve as examples and as a source for further innovation.



### Department of Human Resources for Health World Health Organization

1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 791 2506  
Fax: +41 22 791 4747  
bernasconis@who.int  
www.who.int



WORLD FEDERATION FOR  
MEDICAL EDUCATION

### WFME Office

University of Copenhagen  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
Blegdamsvej 3 · DK-2200 Copenhagen N · Denmark  
Tel: +45 35 32 71 03 or +45 35 32 71 05  
Fax: +45 35 32 70 70  
wfme@wfme.org  
www.wfme.org



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## WHO/WFME Strategic Partnership to Improve Medical Education

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) have been working together since 1972 to improve medical education worldwide.

## A strategic partnership

In 2004, WHO and WFME agreed to form a strategic partnership to pursue a long-term workplan designed to have a decisive impact on medical education in particular and ultimately on health professions education in general. This partnership will be open to participation by all medical schools and other education providers.

The strategic partnership is another outgrowth of WHO's strong commitment to supporting its Member States' efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. It will also be an important element of the implementation of the WFME Global Standards Programme.

## Better medical education for better health care

WHO and WFME believe that health professions education – including medical education – should better reflect the needs and changes of health systems and the health condition of the populations they serve.

Health systems are now undergoing reform, driven principally by the increasing demands and finite budgets for health care. The WHO/WFME strategic partnership focuses on the key role of education of physicians and other health care professionals in the development of health services.

As witnessed by the current promotion of educational reforms and accreditation procedures, the time is ripe to improve the quality of medical education. There is a consensus among the medical education establishment that improving medical education will improve the quality of health care and that medical education, in turn, can be improved by implementing globally accepted standards for medical education.

In every WHO region there is evidence of solid work on education quality. The challenge is to identify the interventions through which WHO and WFME can contribute to changes in medical education that will have a significant and lasting positive impact on health systems.

Various approaches to quality improvement in medical education exist and should be explored. The process of change in medical education is subject to the influence of differing forces, interests and social needs. Results of interventions to improve medical education are recognizable only with time, depending on the phase of education in question. In general, for example, the effect of changes in basic medical education is measurable after 5 to 10 years.

But to improve medical education, commitment to and adoption of a process of quality improvement are of paramount importance.

## How the strategic partnership will work

Networks are an effective mechanism for sharing knowledge and creating communities of practice. WHO and WFME will establish global links in order to promote attention to and action on HRH issues, as well as strengthen national capacity to regulate, accredit and develop capacity and leadership throughout the health workforce.

Activities of the strategic partnership will be based on collaboration with:

- national and regional authorities
- WHO regional offices
- WFME regional associations for medical education
- other international organizations
- medical educational institutions.