

## SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE EDUCATION NETWORK

### How-to Guide for Medical Schools

The Sustainable Healthcare Education (SHE) network is a fast-growing group of clinicians, academics and students who have been developing teaching materials linked to Tomorrow's Doctors outcomes. In the coming academic year, these materials and approaches will be tested in a range of medical school settings and evaluated collectively to produce data beyond a series of school-based case studies.

This guide is intended to help medical schools build a successful "SHE Team", creating and exploiting opportunities for sustainable healthcare learning across the curriculum.

#### BACKGROUND

Climate change will bring about significant changes to the social, economic, and demographic determinants of health and therefore to the way in which public health and medicine are conceived of and practised.

There is growing health sector support for action to address climate change. It is increasingly recognised that there are significant health gains to be achieved from reducing carbon emissions, adaptation to climate changes (e.g. planning for the new epidemiological distribution of disease), and more sustainable use of resources.

The *NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy* (SDU, 2009) calls upon "NHS organisations and Strategic Health Authorities [to] work in partnership with Higher Education Institutions to ensure that sustainability and carbon reduction concepts are included in undergraduate curricula." Sir Liam Donaldson echoed this in the *CMO Report 2009*, recommending that "the health impacts of climate change should feature prominently in undergraduate and postgraduate health professional education curricula." This imperative is congruent with the GMC Duty of a Doctor to "protect and promote the health of patients and the public", and also aligns with the *Tomorrow's Doctors (2009)* Outcome for Graduates to "recognise the role of environmental and occupational hazards in ill-health and discuss ways to mitigate their effects." Furthermore, sustainability – the 'seventh dimension of quality' – can also help in achieving other health service goals, such as better patient experience and cost-effectiveness of spending decisions.

It is evident that tomorrow's doctors must be prepared for a very different world, but curricular constraints inhibit change – both of culture and direction. Addressing sustainability and complex global issues can help connect clinical experiences to social, political and environmental contexts, and develop students' understanding of the broader role of doctors in society.

#### THE NETWORK

Within the Network, the '**Evaluation Group**' is made up of half a dozen medical schools which have identified 'Sustainable Healthcare Education' (SHE) teams that can teach across the curriculum (made up of a public health faculty, clinical faculty, GPs and students). The '**Initiating Group**' is made up medical schools which have sustainable healthcare or climate change champions, but no teams yet in place.

Exchange of knowledge and experience are supported through an email discussion group and regular telephone meetings. Shared materials can be accessed online at [www.greenerhealthcare.org/sustainable-healthcare-medical-schools](http://www.greenerhealthcare.org/sustainable-healthcare-medical-schools).

## OVERCOMING BARRIERS

The network's commitment to sustainable healthcare learning is not necessarily shared. In addition to practical tools (e.g. teaching materials), a strategic approach may well be needed to build support among key people in your medical school. The table below sets out a number of barriers which you may encounter, with some possible solutions.

Tomorrow's Doctor's (2009) provides only limited leverage	Global health and "doctors as managers" are important components of TD 2009 which many medical school curricula are not yet addressing. Demonstrate how sustainable healthcare education can help to cover these curricular gaps.
Scepticism on the part of Deans and curricular planners regarding the science of sustainable development/ climate change	Dissemination of information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where: across your school and to selected key opinion formers</li> <li>• What: NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy, references to climate change/sustainability in CMO Report 2009, Lancet series on climate change and health, Marmot Review of Health Inequalities.</li> </ul> Target campaigns at administrative and policy levels, e.g. Curriculum leads, Clinical School Deans and Sub-Deans, GMC.
Lack of available teaching time	Recruit interested teachers from across your medical school. Make use of student-selected components, and support students in developing student-led courses and setting up extra-curricular sessions.
Shortage of faculty competent/confident to teach	Conduct workshops for teaching staff, e.g. at away days; invite them to attend relevant conferences and events.
Lack of awareness / enthusiasm for the topic among students	Student-led awareness campaigns, film showings, etc

## BUILDING YOUR TEAM: STEPS

Have you

1. Contacted all teachers within your department about the importance of sustainable development or the health effects of climate change and opportunities to teach?
2. Circulated details of the SHE Network and accompanying materials, and invited input?
3. Done the same with faculty teaching in other academic departments in the medical school?
4. Identified a lead representative from among public health faculty and one from clinical faculty?
5. Identified local student contacts/ reps, e.g. Medsin/Healthy Planet members to join the team?
6. Personally approached your Dean or Head of School to gain support for sustainable healthcare education?

## PREPARING YOUR SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE EDUCATION: STEPS

1. In your team, review the [SHE learning objectives](#) and opportunities to cover them within the existing curricula – both clinical and public health.

*Aim to relate these to the core curriculum, but look out also for opportunities for more in-depth, student-selected learning. Try to integrate across clinical as well as public health teaching.*

2. Identify whether there is a need for curriculum change.

*If so, then you will need to find out about and engage with your medical school's curriculum development process. Usually, you will have to submit a paper to the Curriculum Committee, and it is well worth pre-briefing the committee members in person before they meet. If the curriculum is at a time of flux, this is a great opportunity for innovation – make sure you take it up! NB: curriculum development often takes place 12-18 months before implementation.*

3. If you have responsibility for a relevant topic area, then you can get on and plan your teaching. Decide on:
  - learning outcomes – see the [SHE learning objectives](#) for medical students
  - pedagogical format – will depend partly on the teaching sessions available to you; use the materials provided for ideas, and have a look at “Curriculum for culturally responsive healthcare” by Jeffrey Ring et al., Radcliffe Publishing Ltd. (2008).
  - materials – many materials are open access – make use of the [SHE Learning Packages](#), and the materials shared via: [www.theclimateconnection.org/connections/medical-schools](http://www.theclimateconnection.org/connections/medical-schools).
  - evaluation – the SHE Learning Packages include guidance on this also.

4. Support your colleagues

*Remember this could be a new subject area for them. Consider arranging staff training (e.g. at away days) and invite them to relevant national or local meetings to increase their confidence.*

### Finally...

Don't do it all on your own! The SHE Network is here to support exchange of experience and ideas. SHE may also be able to arrange a link with another medical school for individual support.

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more information please contact:

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