

Title: Medical competencies in the Medicine Department: Changes to address current needs

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What problem was addressed: By mandatory Brazilian government policies, six-year medical undergraduation should emphasize primary care teaching settings. However, discipline specific structure for medical education makes it difficult to identify common core competencies and to determine in which level (primary, secondary or tertiary care) they could be taught and assessed. In addition once finished undergraduation students get licensed automatically when receiving their diploma. Therefore we describe a process for improving awareness of the need for an interdisciplinary approach and preparation for student practice that is in alignment with government policies, disciplines and student expectations.

What was tried: We asked each of the 14 disciplines of the Department of Medicine and 20 first-year residents what in their opinion are the specific knowledge and skills that medical students should be able to demonstrate at the end of undergraduation. Disciplines discussed the issue and came up with a list that was reviewed in a focus group with up to four faculty members with interest in medical education and a representative of each discipline to discuss the relevance and generalizability of each competency to the specific objective. Basic science knowledge, history taking, physical exam, medical reasoning, theoretical grounding, attitude, professionalism, physician-patient relationship, empathy and adequate knowledge of ordering and interpretation of complementary exams were themes that came up in all discussions. Each specialty came up with a list of competencies that each student or general physician should be able to demonstrate.

What lessons were learned: Faculty is able to come up with competencies that are essential in undergraduate education, however the teaching environment (referral center, number of patients in the clinic, lack of uniformity) difficult adequate teaching. By identifying core competencies we will be able to teach different aspects of it in different teaching settings, improving the knowledge of the undergraduate student.