



European Junior Doctors

EJD Statement of support to the Polish Medical Chamber on upholding medical education quality training standards amidst the surge of new medical schools

The European Junior Doctors Association (EJD) stands with the Polish Chamber of Physicians and Dentists in their commitment to safeguard the high standards of medical education in Poland. A significant concern arises from the recent surge in the number of higher education institutions, especially non-university vocational institutions, being given the authority to offer medical studies and award medical diplomas.

Medical education is not just about mastering professional competencies; it requires the integration of scientific skills, framed within a broader humanistic context. Special emphasis must be laid on ethical considerations, which is best achieved in a university setting. This viewpoint is reinforced by the EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications. It states that basic medical training should span at least five years, comprising a minimum of 5,500 hours of theoretical and practical training, provided by, or overseen by, a university.

Recent changes in workforce planning and accreditation of non-university institutions in Poland have been introduced without consulting the medical community. Decisions by the Ministries of Health and Education and Science over the past 8 years have escalated the number of higher education institutions authorized to offer medical studies from 12 to 39. Alarmingly, many of these institutions are vocational higher education entities which lack university status or equivalent, thus raising questions about the maintenance of the rigorous standards expected of medical education.

High-quality medical education demands diverse teaching staff, access to clinical databases, and appropriate facilities for students. Vocational higher education institutions face significant challenges in meeting these strict requirements. Additionally, there's a noticeable scarcity of qualified teaching staff in Poland to cover for all the newly created positions.

Such shifts could inevitably dilute the depth of knowledge and readiness for quality patient care among graduates, potentially compromising patient safety and the overall quality of health services. Merely increasing the number of medical graduates will not address the staffing challenges in the healthcare system nor enhance the quality of patient care.

It's worth noting that qualifications from non-university settings might not meet the criteria stipulated by EU law and, therefore, may not be automatically recognized by other EU Member States.

EJD supports their Polish counterparts in their view that national authorities should prioritize enhancing the educational standards at existing universities. Any increase in medical student admissions should align with available infrastructure and teaching resources. Institutions lacking a favourable evaluation by the national accrediting body should not be authorized to offer medical studies.

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