



Social Accountability and Accreditation of Medical Schools: Are New Norms Needed?

**Tuesday 27 May 2008,
16:00-17:30
International Conference Centre Geneva
Room 16**

The World Health Organization has defined the Social Accountability of Medical Schools as *“the obligation to direct their education, research and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region, and/or nation they have a mandate to serve. The priority health concerns are to be identified jointly by governments, health care organizations, health professionals and the public.”*¹

Through their education, research and service delivery functions, academic institutions in the health sector have a major influence on a health system. To be socially accountable, medical schools must be able to identify and anticipate people’s priority health concerns as well as the capacity of a health system to respond. Mandates and programmes must be revisited accordingly to best meet requirements of quality, equity, relevance and effectiveness in health care. Socially accountability also implies that medical schools should assume a higher level of responsibility in the way their products, being graduates, research results or service delivery models, are being used and do affect health system functions and people’s health. Although such principles are gaining recognition worldwide, important challenges remain in making the necessary changes. One of the most powerful leverages to spur such changes is the establishment of an accreditation system based on norms highlighting principles of social accountability. Such norms are yet to be defined, validated and advocated by national and international agencies.

Key questions:

- 1- To what extent are universities and training institutions proactive in addressing priority health problems in society?
- 2- Does the notion of excellence imply outstanding achievements in improving health development at community and national level?
- 3- Which partnerships should universities and training institutions develop with other health actors to be in a better position to improve a health system?
- 4- Which factors would influence accreditation systems to take into account principles of social accountability?

Background Documents:

¹ Defining and measuring the social accountability of medical schools; Division of Development of Human Resources for Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland; 1995.

Boelen, Charles A new paradigm for medical schools a century after Flexner's report. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 2002, vol.80, n. 7, ISSN 0042-9686.

http://www.scielosp.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0042-96862002000700013

Ho .K. Social accountability of medical schools in a globalized world, Journal of Humanitarian Medicine - vol. VII - n. 4 - October - December 2007

http://www.iahm.org/journal/vol_7/num_4/text/vol7n4p43.htm