Thursday 17th March 2022

Dear Professor Dame Carrie MacEwen,

As medical students we ask the General Medical Council to address the omission of Climate Change and Planetary Health from the General Medical Council’s Outcomes for Graduates 2018.

The impact of climate change on health is undeniable. Extreme weather, rising temperatures, poor air quality, and food insecurity are just some examples of how ecological degradation and climate change are detrimental to health. Additionally, these effects have the greatest impact on societies most vulnerable. In the United Kingdom, we are already seeing the impacts of climate change and these harms to health are accelerating. Healthcare plays a large role in driving this ecosystem destruction and contributes around 5% of the UK's anthropogenic greenhouse gases. Planetary health is a solutions orientated, transdisciplinary field focused on addressing the impacts of human disruption to Earth’s natural systems, on human health, and all life on Earth.

Last year the Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC), a global student initiative, published a total of 62 assessments, including 30 from medical schools within the UK. Each report included a thorough examination of the medical school's climate change and planetary health teaching, along with research practices, faculty supported student activities, campus sustainability and community engagement. The PHRC is increasingly acknowledged for its value to medical education through a number of publications including a recent article in the British Medical Journal. The 2022 report is in its final drafting phase and will be published on the 22nd of April 2022, providing new insight into the current state of planetary health education around the world.

The data shows that although medical schools are beginning to include teaching on addressing climate change within their core curriculum, many are not or only doing so in optional courses. This is not enough. Medical schools must be mandated to include this important teaching. Medical students need to be taught that their actions and future healthcare practices have local and global environmental consequences that exacerbate inequalities and are detrimental to the health of millions of people. Additionally, the threat of climate change on human health needs detailed and comprehensive coverage in core curriculum material.

In Outcomes for graduates 2018, current outcomes 25c, d, f and k do not sufficiently cover the broad extent to which the climate and ecological crisis and healthcare are interlinked. Specific outcomes that acknowledge climate change as ‘the greatest threat to human health’ alongside the impact the healthcare industry has on the global environment, are necessary in today’s healthcare education.
We call on you, the General Medical Council, to fulfil your responsibility in setting the standards for all medical schools by ensuring this vital climate change and planetary health education is taught in all schools. We urge you to expedite the review process of the upcoming submission of the Medical Schools Council’s proposed Education for Sustainable Healthcare curriculum, which will aid with this task.

Furthermore, in reference to the GMC’s 2021 February meeting, agenda item M6, paragraph 3e, we also ask you to disclose the methods of your quality assurance engagement with medical students. The Planetary Health Report Card network has over 300 members, yet none have been invited to any quality assurance activities. We do not feel students are being appropriately engaged in the development of new medical education guidance.

Each of the signatures below is a UK medical student, representing their voice and expressing their concern. Education is our most valuable asset, and we are privileged to be in training today. But as doctors of tomorrow, we face unprecedented new challenges both in our patients’ health and healthcare provision. We are committed to building a sustainable future for our friends, family and future patients. We need you to commit to outcomes that ensure we are prepared.

We look forward to your response and would be grateful if a meeting could be organised between yourself and a selection of the signatories of this letter. Please respond in the first instance to James Lee at j.lee3@uni.bsms.ac.uk.

References:
- The Planetary Health Report Card. [https://phreportcard.org](https://phreportcard.org)
- The Planetary Health Alliance. [https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org/](https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org/)
- Planetary Health Alliance. [https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org](https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org)
- Chase H, Hampshire K, Tun S. 2022. Improving the medical curriculum on planetary health and sustainable healthcare. BMJ. 376:209. DOI: [https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o209](https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o209)
Signed:

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