

Letter to the Editor, The Vancouver Sun

January 29, 2010

As practicing doctors who teach undergraduate medical students and post-graduate specialist residents, we support every effort to increase the numbers of physicians practicing in Canada (“*The doctor dilemma*” Jan.29, page B2). But that won’t be possible by just increasing the numbers of students in medical school or tinkering with the hours they spend in classrooms.

Roughly two-thirds of the instruction a medical student receives is from clinical faculty. It is not an understatement to say Canadian medical schools cannot function in the absence of clinical faculty, with or without medical school expansion. Clinical faculty are doctors who voluntarily interrupt their busy practices to train students to work within the complex healthcare environment. We help them apply the science they learn in medical school to the care of sick and injured patients. ‘On the job’ training is perhaps the most crucial part of transforming a medical student into a doctor. Unfortunately, our role is part of an under-recognized system of training that desperately needs administrative recognition and formalization.

We are dedicated to working with all our healthcare colleagues to ensure we collectively provide the best training for Canada’s future physicians.

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