

Curriculum Modifications in Tbilisi State Medical University

Tbilisi state Medical University, Georgia

Tbilisi State Medical University, the first medical school in Georgia was established in 1918. Since 1930 it gained the status of independent high medical educational institution. At present the university has 9 faculties and just over 5,000 undergraduate students.

In order to converge with European standards TSMU has implemented a full ranging reform of study programmes. Since 2000 the European Credit-Transfer System has been implemented at all faculties of TSMU. The core curriculum for Medicine has been revised in accordance with the European standards (the European Commission 93/16 Directive): the number of hours has been reduced from 8000 to 5760, the seven years of study were reduced to six and non-profile disciplines were removed from the core curriculum and teaching programmes.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and declaration of Georgia's independence TSMU has carefully analyzed all possible alternatives of medical education models before selecting a proper model for the post-Soviet era. We recognized that the immediate implementation of models: problem-based learning, distance education or e-learning would be impossible, because such implementation to be successful would have required considerable financial resources, advanced technical facilities and textbooks that are beyond the reach of TSMU due to the economic crises following Georgia's independence.

Therefore, TSMU has chosen an outcome-based model, which does not follow a single strategy of teaching processes and can easily incorporate some elements of the other models while preventing curriculum fragmentation. This will allow for the combination of the outcome-based model with elements of problem-based model or with elements of case-based model.

Prior to change TSMU had traditional medical curriculum with a lecture-oriented, discipline-based teaching process. The courses placed emphasis on lectures with few opportunities for active learning. There was no horizontal integration of courses and the efforts at vertical integration were minimal. The curriculum did not emphasize professionalism and communication skills. The connection

between basic science and clinical experiences was weak and there was sharp demarcation between them.

We have abandoned classical view of pre-clinical and clinical boundaries, and follow the new trends in medical education that favor contacts of students with patients as early as possible. An important change of core curriculum was the initiation of the so called "delimitation model" in order to remove sharp demarcation between two, pre-clinical and clinical stages. A "delimitation model" would introduce the student to clinical experiences from the outset and would carry basic science education through the clinical stage. This model allows for move to a modular format of some courses. The modular format improved both vertical and horizontal integration and allowed for combination of the outcome-based learning with elements of problem-based and case-based learning.

In TSMU the reforms ultimate purposes are as follows:

- To prepare students to function as medical professionals in the social and technological environment of the 21st century.
- To prepare skillful, productive, ethical physicians who advance and apply, in a humane and professional fashion, scientific discoveries and technological innovations to the health care needs of individual patients, their families, and to larger societal groups.
- To foster self-directing learning and lifelong learning skills.
- Both before and since the reform process was begun, we have asked students who matriculate at TSMU why they chose our university. Before the reform, there was no single dominant reason. After the curriculum change, more than 70 percent of matriculating students have said that the new curriculum was a major reason for their having chosen TSMU.
- At last we should designated that the curriculum at TSMU should undergo evaluation that will guide its improvement.