

The postgraduate curriculum development project of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists, Faculty of Radiation Oncology

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The Australian Medical Council has adopted CanMEDS principles as the basis of accreditation by Australian and New Zealand medical speciality colleges. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists initiated a major overhaul of its education and training programs through its Curriculum Development Project in 2005, with the objective that its postgraduate specialists would meet agreed minimum standards of competency by completing a purpose-built training program modeled on the CanMEDS Framework.

The project encompassed a review of assessments, accreditation, training programs and College governance. It also had implications for directing continuing professional development by identifying those competencies related to life-long learning to be maintained throughout professional practice.

A curriculum advisory committee, which included faculty fellows, community representatives, educational consultants and administrative staff, was charged with steering the project through to its completion. The initial task was to define the unique role of a radiation oncologist adapted to the CanMEDS descriptors. This was followed by the identification of themes from these Roles in clinical practice. Learning outcome statements that specified skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours were then written. The final phases of the project included identification of work-based learning activities, resources, supervision and formative feedback, and, lastly, the assessment tools to evaluate achievement of the intended outcomes. The assessment methods were chosen according to evidence-based educational best practice and, where possible, were subject to pilot evaluation.

The CanMEDS Framework was an invaluable tool for developing the curriculum. Key changes from the previous training program included a comprehensive definition of the role of a radiation oncologist with clearly articulated objectives and criteria for competencies. These were linked to standardized and contextualized learning programs within the workplace that incorporated formative assessments. The new curriculum was launched in 2009. Given that it will have a major impact on resources and represents a significant cultural change, good management of its implementation will be crucial for its success.

Reference(s):

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