

Students as drivers for global health and pandemic preparedness in medical education in Germany

Annika Kreitlow

A Kreitlow^{1,2}, S Steffens², A Jablonka³, E Kuhlmann³

¹German Medical Students' Association, Berlin, Germany

²Dean's Office, Hannover Medical School, Hanover, Germany

³Clinic for Rheumatology and Immunology, Hannover Medical School, Hanover, Germany

Contact: annika.kreitlow@stud.mh-hannover.de

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced Germany's role as global health player, but the education system is lagging behind and does not adequately prepare health professionals for the new challenges. This study aims to strengthen global health in undergraduate medical education in Germany. Major objectives include: to review the current situation, explore changing demand for global health and introduce innovative teaching models and the role of student as drivers for change.

Methods:

Mixed methods and an explorative approach were applied, comprising a scoping review, online surveys carried out at Hannover Medical School, March/April 2020, and finally a new multi-professional teaching courses initiated by students and developed collaboratively. Target groups of the survey were undergraduate medical students (n = 384) and additionally lecturers (n = 172).

Results:

The results reveal that new health policies and Germany's new global political responsibility do not adequately translate into innovation in the education system. At the same time, demand for global health education has increased markedly and students have taken action bottom-up and introduced new courses. However, the transformative power on the level of institutions is limited. There is a need for appropriate funding and comprehensive governance innovation to align health and

education institutions, research and education, policy and practice, and students and lecturers.

Conclusions:

Implementation of global health programmes illustrates how students can become change agents and enhance institutional innovation bottom-up. However, in order to achieve wider transformative potential, these efforts must be flanked by macro-level policy changes and integrated in future pandemic preparedness strategies.

Key messages:

- Strengthening global health education is driven by students' demand and novel teaching models.
- Innovation driven by students needs institutional support to achieve transformative powers.