Title: How should faculties of medicine engage community?

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Abstract

Background: Socially accountable faculties of medicine (FoMs) recognize their responsibility to address the priorities of the communities they serve. However, FoMs must collaborate with the community if these priorities are to be identified and acted upon effectively. This community engagement is a vital, but often ambiguous and inconsistent component of social accountability. Therefore, we have conducted a scoping review to identify practical guidelines for how FoMs should engage community partners.

Objectives: To identify articles describing how FoMs engage their communities and synthesize existing knowledge to provide practical recommendations.

Methods: We searched PubMed and Scopus databases for articles describing projects, programs, or partnerships involving FoMs and community representatives. Descriptive information was extracted, analyzed thematically, and reviewed by content experts and community partners.

Results: 1200 articles were initially identified, 40 of which met eligibility criteria and were ultimately included. Analysis revealed three overarching themes. First, 5 recommendations centered on "Partners," providing suggestions for who FoMs should engage as community partners. E.g., community partners should reflect the communities the FoM serves; FoMs should partner with Indigenous communities; and community partners and the FoM should share common goals. Second, 14 recommendations (plus sub-themes) centered on "Partnerships," guiding how FoMs can foster creative and authentic collaboration with community partners. E.g., partnerships should be purposeful and actively sustained; FoMs should credit community partners' contribution to their collaborative work; and FoMs should critically reflect upon and address intrinsic biases that may impact their participation in partnerships. Third, 12 recommendations (plus sub-themes) centered on "Programs and Projects," describing the nature and characteristics of such opportunities that facilitate true collaboration between FoMs and community. E.g., projects must be relevant to communities' needs and values; community partners should be represented at each organizational level of the project; and project data and outcomes should be accessible to the community.

Conclusions: Practical guidance enables FoMs to participate in authentic community partnerships with meaningful and reciprocal commitments. Despite limited published guidance on community engagement, the literature is rich with descriptions of community-FoM partnerships. We have identified clear recommendations for community engagement that are evidence-based, reflexive, and responsive.