



News & Views

MedPAC to Focus on Medical Education

In its June 2009 report to Congress, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) recognized the reform of medical education as a key component in transforming the nation's health care system. According to MedPAC, medical schools and residency programs "need to emphasize a set of skills and knowledge that will equip students and residents to practice and lead in reformed delivery systems that work under restructured payment incentives." The report concluded that residency programs' curricula are not well aligned with the objectives of delivery system reform, and financial incentives and regulatory issues discourage non-hospital residency experience.

In its future discussions, MedPAC will focus on three main areas: linking delivery system reforms to medical education incentives, structuring medical education subsidies to produce the professionals we need, and enlisting other payers to contribute explicitly to medical education.

For the full text of the report, go to www.medpac.gov/documents/Jun09_EntireReport.pdf.

AMSA Reports that Medical Schools Show Improvement on Conflict-of-Interest Policies

According to an annual survey by the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) and the Pew Prescription Project,

more than one-fifth of medical schools improved their conflict of interest policies in the past year.

The AMSA PharmFree Scorecard assigns letter grades to institutions based on the following criteria: gifts and meals from industry, paid promotional speaking for industry, acceptance of free drug samples, interaction with sales representatives, and industry-funded education programs.

Of the 149 medical schools that participated, 45 received a grade of A or B, compared with only 29 last year. Thirty-five schools received an F, 23 of which received the grade automatically for not responding to policy solicitations.

For further information, go to www.amsa.org/news/release2.cfx?id=382.

Women Still Underrepresented on Research Faculties

The National Research Council has released a report indicating that women are still underrepresented in the applicant pool for faculty positions in math, science, and engineering at major research universities. The report, titled "Assessing Gender Differences in the Careers of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Faculty," also found, however, that those who do apply for faculty positions are interviewed and hired at rates equal to or higher than men.

Between 1993 and 2003, women represented 45% of the PhDs in biology at research-intensive universities, but only 26%

of applicants for tenure-track positions. According to the report, the only strategy that appeared to increase the number of women in the applicant pool was "having a female chair of the search committee and a high number of women on the committee."

For additional information, go to www.nas.edu/morenews/20090602.html. ❖