The American Medical Association (AMA) on Wednesday awarded grants totaling $370,000 to 15 medical schools and institutions for innovative medical education projects that train physicians to succeed in the rapidly evolving healthcare system.

Announced on Wednesday, the first day of the AMA's ChangeMedEd 2019 conference in Chicago, Illinois, the grants support initiatives in areas ranging from telemedicine and augmented intelligence to population health and student well-being.

The Accelerating Change in Medical Education Innovation Grant Program is part of a 6-year-old, $30 million AMA effort to improve medical education. The initiative is led by a consortium of more than three dozen medical schools. The project has produced a textbook on health systems science that is used by many medical schools.

The AMA has worked with medical schools to create a more flexible approach to their curricula that encourages competency-based training. To achieve this goal, 2 years ago the AMA consortium released a handbook that teaches faculty members how to coach students and residents to prepare them for their next steps, Susan E. Skochelak, MD, AMA group vice president for medical education, told Medscape Medical News.

This year, she said, the consortium published a handbook for students to help them understand the coaching concept.

Health Systems Education

The most important advance has been in the teaching of health systems science, she noted. In 2013, when the consortium was launched, "medical schools and residency programs taught doctors very little about how the health system worked or where it was headed," she said. At most, a school might offer a one-off course on quality improvement or social determinants of health.

Today, in contrast, "more than 50% of medical schools are teaching [health systems science] or related topics," Skochelak estimated.

Physicians and healthcare leaders, she said, are enthusiastic about this new direction in medical schools, "because they need people who can function in this [value-based-care] environment." An editorial in Academic Medicine last December said that one of the quality markers for medical education is the teaching of health systems science, she added.

Another sign that the AMA's approach has gained traction is that the American Board of Medical Examiners now includes this subject in its licensing exam, she pointed out.

Population health management and social determinants of health are included in the agenda for the 3-day ChangeMedEd meeting. Also featured are presentations, panel discussions, and workshops on the residency selection process, resiliency of physicians to avoid burnout, healthcare transformation, medical business ethics, digital literacy, the use of apps in medical education, and "reimagining residency."

The latter concept is the keystone of a complementary AMA program named Reimagining Residency, as reported by Medscape Medical News. Announced in June, this program will award $14.4 million to support eight projects led by medical schools, residency programs, and healthcare systems that oversee graduate medical education. Some of these projects will also address health systems science.

Eleven medical schools were awarded $30,000 grants in the second annual iteration of the innovation grant program. They include the following:

- Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine, in Ohio
- Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, in New York City
- H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute, in Tampa, Florida
- Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, in Bethesda, Maryland
- University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, in Little Rock
The following four schools will receive $10,000 grants:

- Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in Baltimore, Maryland
- University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson
- Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, in Richmond
- Rayos Contra Cancer, in San Francisco, California

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