Training Physicians for Careers in Public Health

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About ACPM

• National professional society for preventive medicine physicians established in 1954.
• Represents 2,000 physicians certified in preventive medicine and other specialties (e.g., internal medicine, pediatrics, emergency medicine, psychiatry, etc.)
• Members have been engaged in preventive medicine practice, teaching, and research for past 50 years.
ACPM Position

• Preventive medicine residency training and certification is the Gold Standard for public health physicians.
• Dedicated federal funding is needed to ensure a steady supply of these physicians.
• Model(s) must be created to determine number of public health physicians needed.
What is a public health physician?
Public Health Physician Defined

“One whose training, practice and worldview are based in large part on a population focus rather than individual practice; that is, on assuring the availability of essential public health services to a population using skills such as leadership, management, and education as well as clinical intervention.”

Physicians’ Roles in Public Health Workforce

- Leadership, clinical interventions, management, administration, policy, and media/public relations
- Responsible for health of populations
- Bridge between clinical and public health sectors
What does a physician need to know or be able to do to be designated a public health physician?
Pathways to Public Health Competency

• Graduate education
  – Master of Public Health (MPH)
  – Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH)
  – Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)

• Graduate medical education
  – Preventive medicine residency training and certification
Competency of Public Health Physicians

• The ACPM position is that the pathway for physicians to attain the highest level of competency in public health is through residency training and board-certification in preventive medicine.
Preventive Medicine and the Public Health Workforce

• Preventive Medicine (PM) is the medical specialty dedicated to *health promotion* and *disease prevention*.

• Only board-certified specialty that combines clinical and *population-based health practice*.

• One of the 24 medical specialties recognized by American Board of Medical Specialties
How does the preventive medicine training program prepare physicians to fulfill their roles in public health?
Graduate Medical Education

• Three-year residency after medical school
  – First year: clinical training (internship)
  – Second year: academic year (MPH)
  – Third year: practicum year (field training)

• Exam leading to PM board certification
Graduate Medical Education

• Board certification is the process society uses to ensure that a public health physician is appropriately trained and prepared to be a leader in public health practice.
Preventive Medicine Physicians: The Value Equation

- **Public Health and General Preventive Medicine**
  - Community health experts
  - Preparing physicians for public health practice

- **Occupational Medicine**
  - Work-related illness and injury experts
  - Fulfilling needs of corporate America

- **Aerospace Medicine**
  - Air and space medical experts
  - Providing unique services to industry and government
Preventive Medicine in Action

• ACPM preparing a series of vignettes to illustrate preventive medicine physicians in action.

• To be presented to the committee in advance of its next meeting.
Examples of Preventive Medicine Practice Sites

- Federal agencies
- State and local health departments
- Academia
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Healthcare organizations
- Private industry
- Policy-making bodies
- Military institutions
Preventive Medicine: State of the Specialty
Number of Preventive Medicine Specialists

- In 2004: 7,830 (7,518 excluding dual certifications) living PM diplomates.
  - 3,634 General PM/Public Health
  - 3,079 Occupational/Environmental Health
  - 1,117 Aerospace Medicine
Supply Shrinking

• Decreasing percentage of PM doctors of total physician workforce (2.3%  0.8%)
• PM residency programs closing (89  76)
• From 434 residents in 1996 to 350 today
Annual Number of Preventive Medicine Residents

- 2001-2002: 427 residents
- 2002-2003: 398 residents
- 2003-2004: 357 residents
- 2004-2005: 351 residents
- 2005-2006: 346 residents
Supply Barriers

• Funding
  – Only specialty not supported by Medicare, Medicaid, or other third-party payers
  – Title VII (HRSA) on the ropes
  – Residencies must cobble together funds
  – Many residents must subsidize their own training

• Medical student recruitment
  – Awareness, matching, available slots
Demand

- **High** demand despite low supply:
  - COGME recommended increase in PM physicians as a national goal
  - IOM calls for **more** public health leaders
  - Organizations across spectrum conclude demand for public health professionals is **skyrocketing**
  - Payers, policy makers, and health insurers increasingly recognize the need for prevention
  - Growing public health threats (emerging infectious diseases, bioterrorism, natural disasters)
ACPM Recommendations

1. Validate preventive medicine GME training and board certification as the gold standard of competency for public health physicians

2. Identify and promote models for quantifying the need for public health physicians

3. Recognize the need to grow the pipeline of Preventive Medicine physicians and for dedicated federal funding for residency training
Thank you