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Volume 384, Issue 9945, 30 August–5 September 2014, Pages 819-827

Review

Transformation of the education of health professionals in China: progress and challenges

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61307-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61307-6)

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Summary

In this Review we examine the progress and challenges of China's ambitious 1998 reform of the world's largest health professional educational system. The reforms merged training institutions into universities and greatly expanded enrolment of health professionals. Positive achievements include an increase in the number of graduates to address human resources shortages, acceleration of production of diploma nurses to correct skill-mix imbalance, and priority for general practitioner training, especially of rural primary care workers. These developments have been accompanied by concerns: rapid expansion of the number of students without commensurate faculty strengthening, worries about dilution effect on quality, outdated curricular content, and ethical professionalism challenged by narrow technical training and growing admissions of

students who did not express medicine as their first career choice. In this Review we underscore the importance of rebalance of the roles of health sciences institutions and government in educational policies and implementation. The imperative for reform is shown by a looming crisis of violence against health workers hypothesised as a result of many factors including deficient educational preparation and harmful profit-driven clinical practices.



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