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AMA submission to the Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand Inclusive Medical Education Stakeholder Consultation

Thank you for inviting the AMA to comment on the Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (MDANZ) new guidance document: *Inclusive Medical Education: Guidance on medical program applicants and students with a disability*.

The AMA believes that overall, this is a much-improved document. It is significantly more inclusive and addresses many of the concerns the AMA raised in relation to the MDANZ Inherent Requirements for Studying Medicine in Australia and New Zealand document released in 2016.

Noting the stakeholder questions, the AMA has the following additional comments to make:

1. What do you think about the guidance document overall?

1. The AMA supports the revised guidance document. It is significantly more inclusive and addresses many of the concerns the AMA raised in relation to the Inherent requirement document.
2. More broadly, medical schools have a responsibility to ensure their graduates are suitable for internship registration and are capable and safe when they start working as interns. As such the opening statement: "It is important for all involved to recognise that medical schools are not responsible for the student's eligibility for registration as a medical practitioner" should be revised.

2. Do you think the purpose of the document is clear?

1. Overall, the purpose of the document is clear.
2. The reflective questions at Appendix 1 are relevant to all prospective/current medical students. While these points should be discussed and while all of them are ideal, the inability to achieve all of them may not be required to complete medical school e.g., there will be some very capable doctors who will not be able to take part in a full physical examination or cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
3. Likewise, while patient contact / clinical roles require effective communication, there are many doctors who struggle with this and who choose nonclinical roles. As such when reflecting on

effective nonverbal communication the document should be inclusive of the neurodiversity of colleagues.

4. It would benefit from aligning with the University of Michigan's approach of amending their technical standards to make them more inclusive of students with disabilities by adding the following phrase to every skill, "where a candidate's ability to observe or acquire information through these... is compromised, the candidate must demonstrate alternative means and/or abilities to acquire essential observational information".

3. What are its strengths?

1. It discusses how to support applicants and students with a disability in a positive way and uses enabling and inclusive language.
2. The document makes good use of prompts for consideration by medical schools.
3. The use of five domains gives the document a clear structure and focus, again in a positive and action-oriented manner.

4. What are its weaknesses?

The following would be useful additions to the document:¹

1. Include the development of an evaluation and reporting framework to monitor medical school commitment to the full and equitable inclusion of qualified learners with disabilities.
2. Provide staff training on how to support applicants/students living with a disability, university policy and what support and services exist to support applicants/students living with a disability to apply for/undertake the medical program.
3. Encourage universities to employ a disabilities support/wellbeing officer who has knowledge of university policy, guidance documents and appropriate disability support services.
4. Nominate a key person who will:
 - a. communicate with the student for anything relating to their health condition or disability,
 - b. be responsible for implementing the agreed action plan, and
 - c. monitor and report on success of action plan
5. Promote wellness by making sure students are aware of support services available and normalise seeking help behaviour.

¹ See also AMA Queensland Guidance Document for Medical Schools, Medical Colleges and Employers Doctors with Disabilities (2020).
https://qld.ama.com.au/sites/qld/files/QLD/PDFs/Policy/AMAQ_Doctors_with_Disabilities_Guidance_document_2020.pdf

6. Conduct awareness training which highlights successful students with disabilities who have moved into the medical profession.
7. Involve/include career supervisors in schools to provide career advice to high school students living with a disability who are interested in a career in medicine.
8. Provide advice on an appeals mechanism for unsuccessful applicants/students.

Consider adding prompts to:

a. Promoting inclusivity

- What training is provided to staff about how to support applicants/students living with a disability?

d. Available supports and services

- How are supports and services promoted? Are they visible and accessible to applicants and students with a disability?
- Are staff aware of university policy, supports and services?
- Is there a disabilities support/wellbeing officer who has knowledge of university policy, guidance documents and appropriate disability support services?

5. What do you think the impact of this guidance document might be on prospective or current medical students?

1. The document is a step towards creating an inclusive and respectful medical school environment and curricula that provides all students with the best chance to succeed in their chosen career.
2. In doing so it promotes the development of a diverse medical profession reflective of the community it services.

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