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Key takeaways from the Asia Pacific Medical Education Conference (APMEC) 2025

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Abstract

Introduction: The Asia Pacific Medical Education Conference (APMEC) 2025 focused on evolving medical education amidst global transformations. The theme, "Developing a Holistic Healthcare Practitioner for a Sustainable Future," emphasised integrating sustainability, inclusivity, and advanced technologies like AI into healthcare education.

Methods: APMEC 2025 featured a comprehensive program including 29 workshops, 1 special course, 2 keynote speeches, 6 plenary sessions, 19 symposia, and 3 panel discussions, with 84 free communications and 107 short communications presented. The conference facilitated dialogues on innovative curriculum design, sustainability in healthcare education, AI integration, and interprofessional education.

Results: Key discussions emphasised incorporating "Possibility Thinking" and student-centered learning, embedding planetary health in curricula, and integrating AI while preserving essential human skills like empathy. The NUS Common Curriculum for Healthcare Professional Education demonstrated significant improvements in empathy and teamwork. The conference highlighted the importance of faculty development and inclusivity, particularly concerning disability in medical education.

Conclusion: APMEC 2025 demonstrated a commitment to transforming medical education through collaboration and innovation. By aligning educational practices with global trends and regional needs, APMEC serves as a catalyst for comprehensive curriculum reforms. Ongoing efforts are needed to translate these insights into actionable strategies, ensuring future healthcare professionals are well-prepared to address dynamic global challenges.

Practice Highlights

- Student involvement in curriculum planning is essential to enhance student-centered learning and competency-based education.
- AI's role in augmenting healthcare education while ensuring the retention of essential human skills.
- Incorporating planetary health concepts into medical curricula to prepare healthcare professionals for environmentally responsible practice.
- Implementing structured models like NUS's Common Curriculum to improve empathy and teamwork in healthcare training.
- Enhancing teaching quality and leadership through structured faculty training programs, crucial for sustained educational improvements.

I. INTRODUCTION

The APMEC conference was held this year from January 13th (Monday) to 18th (Saturday) at Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore. Medical education is in the midst of a global transformation, influenced by technological advancements, new pedagogical techniques, and a focus on sustainability and inclusivity. The Asia Pacific Medical Education Conference (APMEC) serves as a crucial platform for medical educators, researchers, and policymakers to discuss and shape the future of healthcare education. This year's theme, "Developing a Holistic Healthcare Practitioner for a Sustainable Future - Trends ○ Issues ○ Priorities ○ Strategies," highlights the alignment of medical education with sustainable practices, innovative learning, and inclusive policies. The conference featured 29 workshops, 1 special course, 2 keynotes, 6 plenary sessions, 19 symposia, 3 panel

discussions, 84 free communications, and 107 short communications, providing a comprehensive platform for exchange and learning.

II. LEARNINGS FROM VARIOUS SESSIONS

The concept of "Possibility Thinking" advocating for a shift beyond disease-focused approaches toward holistic healthcare strategies was shared in Plenary 1 by Professor Ronald Harden. Prof Harden emphasised the need for student engagement in curriculum planning, fostering a more integrated and participatory learning experience. This aligns with global calls for student-centered learning, competency-based education, and the co-creation of curricula with learners. In line with this year's theme, symposiums explored how to embed sustainability in medical education. Climate change is affecting global health, making sustainability a key focus in health professions education worldwide.

In the opening keynote, Prof Yang Faridah shared practical approaches for resource-poor countries. She gave examples from Malaysia, showing how medical schools are integrating planetary health into their curricula. This prepares future healthcare professionals for environmentally responsible practice. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping health professions education. It enhances decision-making, improves efficiency, and boosts diagnostic accuracy. However, panellists stressed the irreplaceable value of human skills like empathy, communication, and ethical judgment. The discussion highlighted a global shift towards integrating AI in healthcare education while ensuring technology complements, not replaces, the human touch. Another key aspect discussed at the conference was how best to restore engagement and joy in learning by revitalising medical. Several sessions focused on applying practical strategies to boost engagement and create supportive learning environments. Key discussions covered creative learning approaches that use playfulness to improve concept retention. Panellists highlighted the importance of teamwork in reducing loneliness and enhancing performance. They also stressed the need for inclusive, psychologically safe spaces that nurture enthusiasm for medical education. The speakers also emphasised mentorship and peer support as critical factors in reducing burnout and increasing overall satisfaction. Participants explored strategies to encourage work-life balance, recognising the importance of self-care and having hobbies outside medicine. Addressing burnout triggers and implementing sustainable changes within medical education institutions were highlighted as necessary steps to prioritise joy and well-being alongside academic excellence.

Interprofessional education (IPE) is gaining global recognition as a key strategy to break down professional silos and prepare healthcare graduates for integrated, patient-centred care. In the opening ceremony speech, the Dean of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore, Prof Chong Yap Seng, introduced NUS's Common Curriculum for Healthcare Professional Education, launched in 2023. This structured approach to IPE aims to enhance collaboration. Early evaluations of the program show improvements in empathy, teamwork, and collaborative practice.

Inclusivity, particularly support for students with disabilities in medical and health professions education, was a key focus at APMEC this year. The updated Canadian technical standards were shared by Professor Cheryl Holmes from University of British Columbia defining core competencies based on functional abilities. These standards were developed through collaboration with a diverse group, including learners and physicians with disabilities. This initiative sets a precedent for regional collaboration. It encourages other countries to update educational standards to promote equity, support students with physical challenges, and improve the quality and accessibility of medical education.

Amid these evolving trends, faculty development remains a cornerstone of advancing medical education. Stories shared during the faculty development session illustrated how structured programs empower educators to drive change at institutional, national, and regional levels. Investments in faculty training are critical in ensuring sustained improvements in teaching quality and leadership in health professions education. By exposing participants to global best practices, it encourages the adoption of innovative teaching strategies. These approaches are tailored to address specific regional challenges and opportunities, enhancing the overall quality of medical and health professions education.

III. GLOBAL TRENDS AND IMPACT IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION AND BEYOND

The themes discussed at APMEC align with several global trends shaping the future of medical education. One key shift is the growing adoption of competency-based medical education (CBME), which is gradually replacing traditional time-based models. CBME prioritises the acquisition of practical skills and the application of knowledge in real-world settings, ensuring that graduates are better prepared for clinical practice.

Technological advancements are also playing a transformative role. Artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and simulation-based training are becoming more accessible, revolutionising the way medical students learn. These innovations enhance diagnostic accuracy, refine clinical decision-making, and provide immersive, hands-on learning experiences in a risk-free environment.

At the same time, sustainability in healthcare education is gaining momentum. With increasing awareness of environmental challenges, medical schools are integrating planetary health concepts into their curricula. This ensures that future healthcare professionals are equipped to adopt sustainable practices and address the impact of climate change on global health.

These evolving trends reflect a broader movement towards a more adaptive, technology-driven, and socially responsible approach to training the next generation of healthcare practitioners. Another key area of discussion was student and faculty well-being. There is a growing focus on addressing mental health challenges and reducing burnout in medical training. Faculty well-being is especially crucial, as educators play a vital role in shaping future healthcare professionals. Supporting their mental and emotional health ensures they can provide high-quality education while maintaining their own resilience and job satisfaction.

IV. CONCLUSION

APMEC continues to align global trends with regional needs, acting as a hub for advancing medical education. It drives transformation by offering a platform for knowledge exchange, enabling collaboration among educators and policymakers. The conference strengthens connections between institutions across the Asia-Pacific region, promoting shared learning and research. As participants return to their institutions, the focus must shift to translating insights into concrete actions that improve medical and health professions education. Through collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, APMEC ensures that future healthcare professionals are prepared to tackle the evolving challenges of a dynamic world.

Notes on Contributors

LSS contributes to the conception of the work. LSS, JHTY and DDS drafts the work and revising it, approves the final version to be published, and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Declaration of Interest

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