

Where Have All the Teachers Gone?

In a World Where Research Is King, Who Will Train the Next Generation of Physicians?

by John Barton



“The learning environment is being eroded.”

—Kenneth M. Ludmerer
Medical Educator and
Historian

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—Dean Allen S. Lichter

In an astonishing era when modern medical research is taking gigantic leaps forward, a prominent physician, author and historian believes medical schools should begin looking into the past for help in educating the physicians of the future.

“It has grown difficult to reconcile teaching with research,” Kenneth M. Ludmerer, M.D., explained to an attentive audience in the Towsley Center for Continuing Medical Education for the start of Medical Education Day 2001. “The traditional

model is based on the notion that teaching and research are interrelated, and the best teachers are the best researchers. Before World War II, there was a cohesiveness between teaching and research, a harmony that we’ve almost forgotten today.”

Ludmerer, a professor of medicine and history at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, was the keynote speaker in a day-long series of discussion groups and displays involving “Challenges to Medical Education,” sponsored by the University of Michigan Medical School and the Medical Education Scholars Program on January 23. The Medical Education Scholars Program enables clinical and basic science Medical School

faculty to pursue scholarship in medical education, to take on greater educational leadership, and to become more effective teachers.



“Medical education is an extraordinarily complex issue,” noted U-M Medical School Dean Allen S. Lichter (M.D. 1972), who gave his enthusiastic support to the concept of a day to focus the School’s attention on current issues surrounding medical education. “In the beginning, there was a sense of balance in teaching, research and patient care. The things being researched were the

things being taught. That has changed, and some of the balance must be restored.

“The University of Michigan Medical School has a long tradition of innovation and excellence, and we must show a willingness to invest in our future. The fact is, we have the resolve. We have the will. We have the resources, and we have the desire to solve this problem. We are going to make these things work.”

One of the major problems facing medical education, Ludmerer said, revolves around the changing relationships between researchers, teachers and patients. “There has been a breakdown of the traditional borders between

Scott L. Furney (M.D. 1992), Department of Internal Medicine, makes a point during the "Alternative Methods for Supporting the Educational Effort" panel discussion. Panelists included (left to right) Mary Ellen Bozynski, M.D., Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases; Lisa M. Colletti (M.D. 1985, Residency 1991), Department of Surgery; Furney; and Kent J. Sheets, Ph.D., Department of Family Medicine.

Photos by Lin Goings



disciplines," he said, "and that has brought a growing level of sophistication to our research. It has also been one of the ironies of our success that the patients are being bypassed.

"Another issue has to do with the increasing pressure to be clinically productive. We are losing our teachers because faculty are being converted into full-time researchers. The learning environment is being eroded."

Larry D. Gruppen, Ph.D., served as moderator for the discussion, which began with Ludmerer's declaration that the University of Michigan Medical School is "one of a relatively few schools that shows a genuine interest in medical education." Gruppen is a professor in the Department of Medical Education, director of the Office of Educational Resources and Research, and director of the Medical Education Scholars Program.

Following the initial presentations by Ludmerer and Lichter, Gruppen hosted a panel discussion on "Alternative Methods for Supporting the Educational Effort." Afternoon sessions offered small-group workshops, and a poster display describing medical education research and educational innovations accompanied computer demonstrations.



Members of the program planning committee included Robert M. Anderson, Ed.D.; Joseph C. Fantone, M.D.; Cyril M. Grum, M.D. (Residency 1983); Robert Lash, M.D.; Kimberley D. Lowe; David T. Stern, M.D., Ph.D.; Paula Thompson; and William Wilkerson, M.D.

Ludmerer is an eminent internist, medical educator and historian of medicine. He received his M.D. from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. His first book, *Genetics and American Society*, was published in 1972 and earned a spot on the *Saturday Review's* list of the year's outstanding science books.

Ludmerer's second book, *Learning to Heal*, dealt with the creation of America's system of medical education and was published in 1985. His latest book, *Time to Heal*, was published in 1999 and examined the evolution of American medical education from the turn of the century to the present era of managed care. Both *Learning to Heal* and *Time to Heal* were nominated for Pulitzer Prizes. [m](#)

