

A Critical Review of Global Curriculum Development, Content and Implementation in Oncology

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Valorisation

1. Social Relevance

The incidence of cancer is rapidly growing globally. Consequently, the existing resources to treat cancer are inadequate and many people have little or no access to cancer care. These access issues are especially poignant in low-middle income countries. To mitigate these limitations to accessing cancer care there is a global call to double the cancer professionals by 2035. This has led to increasing efforts to develop global curricula for cancer. The overall aim of this dissertation was to explore the motivations behind and the unintended effects of creating and implementing global curricula in oncology. Using a critical approach, inspired by the work of anti-colonial scholars, we have demonstrated how power and bias influence the development and implementation of global oncology curricula. A number of conclusions and implications can be drawn from the work presented in this dissertation. First, what is considered legitimate knowledge and is therefore prioritized is heavily oriented to the Euro-American, Western perspective. There is a focus on medical expertise underpinned by the biomedical model which may be a factor in the mismatch between curricula and local healthcare needs. Next, diversity plays a critical role in the development and implementation of global curricula. Without attending to diversity there is a mismatch between what is described and what is needed or even possible in local contexts. Finally, global curricula can have a role as an advocacy tool within the healthcare system. They can be used to secure faculty time for training, training positions and other resources. We have identified that resources for implementation remain a significant challenge for global curricula and using these curricula as advocacy tools on the national and international level may be a solution.

2. Target groups

Our work is of potential interest to several groups. These include curriculum developers, those using the curriculum, government agents and funders.

This work will be of interest to curriculum developers because it points to current gaps in processes for development and implementation that may be limiting the application of global curricula in local contexts. These gaps include inadequate representation in the development process and an inattention to diverse competency priorities including humanism. While global standards are important in cancer care, our work shows that standardizing all curricular content may inadvertently eclipse important local imperatives and needs.

For those who are looking to implement global curricula our work may assist them in navigating common challenges associated with diverse educational and health care systems. Specifically, our work demonstrates that change management strategies must incorporate a process for achieving alignment between local health system priorities and the global standards.

Our work will be of interest to those who have regulatory authority or funding authority over national curricular decisions. We have identified the role global curricula play as system advocacy tools including for length of training, training resources and teaching faculty.

3. Products

Our work has provided an archive of existing global curricula in the area of cancer care and a summary of the content of these curricula. This can be a resource to educators and health policy planners.

The recommendations from this dissertation can be directly applied to improve future efforts to develop and implement global curricula, to current efforts to implement global curricula and may be applied to graduate level courses on global health and education.

4. Innovation

Using a critical, anti-colonial stance, we have explored the perceived premises for global curricula and existing challenges. By using oncology as a case example, we investigated unintended aspects of pursuing global curricula that do not actively consider the historical socio-political relationships that have perpetuated differences in health professional education around the world. Positivist ontology and epistemology are dominant in the field on oncology. As we developed our work, with the hopes of speaking to oncologists and oncology educators and a desire to be published in oncology journals we had to balance these differences in ontology and epistemology between what is common in oncology and our approach in this dissertation. We hope in the future, this work will serve as a foundation to advance research that foregrounds power relations and that offers a more nuanced line of inquiry within the field of oncology. We believe our work has added to medical education literature in this capacity.

5. Implementation

The data from this dissertation has been presented at several national and international meetings and has been published in peer-reviewed journals. We have also shared these findings with key stakeholders influential in global curriculum design who may implement some of the recommendations in future efforts of global curriculum development in oncology. The principal author is an oncology educator who also participates in various international forums and will have ongoing opportunities to shape the development and implementation of global oncology curricula.