

TUFH talk

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Topic: Re-orientating primary care doctors for a re-engineered primary care system in South Africa

Sub-theme: Building trust in health interactions with the community

TUFH Talk is The Network: TUFH's version of TED Talks. This unique platform will allow participants to give short, powerful talks (10 minutes or less) with the goal of sharing new and/or well-formed ideas related to a particular topic of interest. This year, the topic of interest is Social Determinants of Health (SDH); of particular interest is how SDH intersects with the topic of trust.

299 of 300 words

Context

South Africa's two-tiered health system does not ensure equal access to all members of its society. A quadruple burden of disease and unequal distribution of human resources between the two health sectors (public and private) further compounds the health challenges faced by this country. For this reason, the post-1994 government embraced the district health services model and has started to implement a revolutionary national health insurance system (NHI). The NHI implementation process has called for a re-engineering of the primary care health system in which primary care doctors from both public and private sectors will join forces to provide better care for their communities.

However, there exists a malalignment between the learning needs of these two sectors' doctors. A structured and coordinated approach is required to align the core skills and competencies of the primary care doctor workforce. Building trust between primary care workers will enable them to unite in caring for their communities and addressing the underlying social determinants of ill-health.

Objectives

This TUFH talk will present a national process followed in South Africa aimed at aligning the ongoing training of primary care doctors to the needs of a changing health system.

Methods

This TUFH talk will describe the process of developing a national postgraduate diploma in primary care for doctors.

Results

A national EuropeAid-funded project facilitated this process. A learning needs survey amongst primary care doctors informed the process. The roles of the primary care doctor were redefined, with emphasis on critical thinking, working in teams and community engagement (to respond to the social determinants of health within a particular community). The newly-aligned diploma is offered from 2016.

Conclusions

The process of preparing primary care doctors for a revitalised health system enhances our understanding of how primary care doctors can be change agents within their communities.