

The Missed Role of Medical Students in Health-Promoting Hospitals

Dear Editor,

The World Health Organization has introduced health-promoting hospitals (HPH) as an effective strategy to make changes, enhance hospital management systems, and improve the health of patients, hospital staff, and the communities served by hospitals.^[1] The standards of HPH consist of five components: demonstrating organizational commitment for HPH, ensuring access to the service, enhancing people-centered health care and user involvement, creating a healthy workplace and healthy setting, and promoting health in the wider society.^[2] Previous research suggests that the establishment of these standards results in many positive health outcomes, such as improved patients' quality of life, reduced treatment complications and costs, and fewer hospitalizations.^[3] Therefore, it seems necessary to move toward HPH.

Change is a constant process in health care, and medical students have always been an integral part of the healthcare system. They can play an effective role in the process of change. Research shows that students have a significant impact on increasing hospital capacity, improving patient access to services, and enhancing the quality of care.^[4,5] Students can also empower staff by providing opportunities for the development, implementation, and evaluation of changes in the healthcare system and society.^[6] In addition, students from medical science universities can contribute to preventing medical errors in various fields of healthcare services.^[7] In summary, the role of students as catalysts for changing healthcare organizations into HPH is evident. However, the potential role of medical science students in achieving the HPH standards is not explicitly outlined, except for their inclusion alongside patients, families, caregivers, and society in Article No. 5 of Standard No. 3.

Upon reviewing the nursing master's degree curricula, it becomes apparent that although progress has been made in many areas toward achieving the necessary standards, the role of medical students in these areas has not been completely addressed. As a nursing student (first author), during my study journey, I had always been concerned about how and in which areas I could cooperate with healthcare organizations, including hospitals while adhering strictly to the recommended nursing master's curriculum.

We strongly believe that students can have a significant impact on at least three components of HPH standards. For example, considering Standard No. 2, which focuses on ensuring access to healthcare services, if medical students are recognized as active contributors in reducing the workload of healthcare providers during service learning, it can greatly facilitate community access to health services in hospitals, urban centers, and rural health facilities. Moreover, by reducing the workload of healthcare

personnel through student involvement, opportunities can be created for enhanced communication and the establishment of social networks, which contribute to promoting a healthy workplace as emphasized in standard No. 4. Furthermore, the participation of students in patient education processes empowers both the society and healthcare personnel, leading to an overall improvement in the health of the society, which is a key aspect of Standard No. 5 (promoting health in the wider society).

Considering the potentials that we have discussed, it seems that the role of medical students in advancing toward HPH has been neglected. Therefore, we recommend conducting further studies to explore the potential role of medical students in achieving HPH standards. It is also necessary to revise medical science curricula, including the nursing master's curriculum, to fully acknowledge and integrate the roles of students in the journey toward HPH.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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