

Division of Social Accountability

August 19, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

The College of Medicine is committed to being socially accountable and responsive, and has recognized the role of service-learning for its faculty and students in fulfilling that commitment. The emphasis is to direct our activities in education, research and health care service towards addressing the priority health concerns of the communities we serve at the local, provincial, national and global levels.

The Division of Social Accountability at the College of Medicine provides support for numerous initiatives that engage our faculty and students in the systemic social and community aspects of health. Many of these initiatives address traditionally underserved community health needs including Aboriginal health, primary health care, urban and rural underserved areas, gender and equity, eco-health, immigrant and refugee health, and global health. Our mandate on social accountability relates to sustainability through its emphasis on how societal, cultural and environmental influences all contribute to the ongoing health and well-being of populations. Like sustainability, social accountability includes a time factor whereby over time health systems are improved through collaborative efforts involving the medical school and community.

For medical students, the concept of social accountability in relation to sustainability is best fulfilled when they engage with the community and experience being socially responsive to community health needs. The U of S health sciences faculty recognizes that community-based, service-learning experiences that integrate and apply social accountability and sustainability are an important foundation for developing health care professionals. This has become increasingly important in the field of primary health care, which requires inter-disciplinary, patient-focused practice, and attention to the social determinants of health. Sustainability and social accountability share the common vision of leaving a positive legacy for future generations.

Over the past 10 years, medical students have not only participated in, but also been active innovators of, social accountability activities including:

- SWITCH and SEARCH are two interdisciplinary clinics serving inner-city neighborhoods in Saskatoon and Regina;
- Making the Links is a multisite longitudinal service-learning experience for medical students in contexts of urban underserved community, rural and remote Aboriginal communities and in the global south in Mozambique;
- the Eco-health Interest Group of health sciences students provides a forum for improved and sustainable environments that limit the impact on human health.

Sincerely,



Ryan Meili, MD, CCFP
Head, Division of Social Accountability