

Wright State School of Medicine Offers New Dual Degree Programs

By Judi Engle

The life so short, the craft so long to learn.

--Hippocrates

Since the days of Hippocrates, preparing physicians for careers in medicine has been a challenge. Curriculum and teaching methodology frequently change to meet the needs of our community, to incorporate advances in technology and research, and to meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. Wright State University School of Medicine has developed two new dual degree programs – the M.D./M.P.H. and M.D./M.B.A. – to help prepare tomorrow’s physicians for needed leadership roles in the areas of public health and health systems management.

“Both of these programs will help the school attract exceptional students, students who want to make a difference in how health care is delivered,” says Howard Part, M.D., dean of the school.

The curriculum for both degree programs will be offered over a five-year period and integrated with the Boonshoft Physician Leadership Development Program, announced last summer through a \$2 million award from Dayton philanthropist Oscar Boonshoft. Half of the gift will develop the leadership program and the other half will provide scholarships for students accepted into the programs. Students will attend monthly leadership sessions designed to improve their analytic, business and management skills.

The Ohio Board of Regents recently approved the new Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) degree, a two-year program administered by the Wright State School of Medicine through the School of Graduate Studies. With this approval, the medical school is developing a combined M.D./M.P.H. degree that will include traditional preparation as a physician with education in public health management or health promotion and education.

Plans for the M.P.H. degree program started three years ago. The need for a stronger public health infrastructure this program will deliver was made obvious by public concerns over anthrax

and increased awareness of bioterrorism after the September 11 attacks. “Those events have dramatically increased the pressure on the national, regional and local public health workforce to meet extraordinary needs that can only be met by highly skilled public health leadership,” says Richard Schuster, M.D., M.M.M., the program’s creator and Boonshoft Chair of the Division of Health Systems Management.

“Medicine needs more highly trained, skilled physician leaders with a background in both public health and medicine. My expectation is that our future graduates will possess the combination of these skill sets and secure careers in health departments, federal agencies, health provider organizations, schools of public health and medicine, private practice, and international health agencies,” says Dr. Schuster.

Wright State’s M.P.H. program is the first in the nation to incorporate a community-based, interdisciplinary educational program in public health and is an excellent example of Wright State’s mission of fostering community-academic partnerships. It is the result of the strengths of seven Wright State colleges and schools in collaboration with the University of Cincinnati and 30 health districts throughout a 16-county region. The leadership of health commissioners William Bines of Montgomery County Combined Health District, Malcolm Adcock of the Cincinnati Health Department, and Jim Luken of the Miami County Health District were the driving force behind this public health community-academic partnership.

The integrated M.D./M.B.A. dual degree program will give select students management and leadership skills as well as knowledge of health economics and population-based medicine. Students in this program will receive an M.D. from the School of Medicine and an M.B.A. with Health Care Concentration from the Wright State University Raj Soin College of Business. The M.D./M.B.A. degree program is designed to develop future leaders of the health care system,

including CEO's of health care organizations, such as hospitals, hospital systems, government agencies and for-profit health care companies.

“Mid-career physicians are usually at the busiest point of their professional lives when they find they could really use the specific analytical and management skills taught in an M.B.A. or M.P.H. program,” explains James Ebert, M.D., recently appointed Program Director for the Boonshoft Physician Leadership Development Program. “Going back to school full time is often not an option. Correspondence courses, while better than nothing, simply do not provide the solid grounding of a formal academic program. The Boonshoft graduates will begin their professional lives with the full complement of training necessary for leadership.”

The coursework for both of these dual degree programs is completed in an integrated fashion over a period of five years. Unlike many other dual degree programs that are essentially year-out programs, these will begin in the first year and end in the fifth, although most of the course work will be spread over the third, fourth and fifth years. The complete M.D. curriculum will be taught; there will be no compromise on education for either degree.

The Division of Health Systems Management will coordinate both of the dual degree programs as well as the Boonshoft Physician Leadership Development Program. The division's mission is to promote the development of management, health economics, leadership, and population-based skills for physicians, hospitals, health systems, and other health care providers and to facilitate dialogue in health care public policy.