

Study shows changing roles of physicians with MBAs

June 26 2014

According to a new study from researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, physician graduates from the MBA program in health care management at Penn's Wharton School report that their dual training had a positive effect on their individual careers and professional lives. Study respondents reported such benefits as career acceleration, professional flexibility, and credibility in multidisciplinary domains. Aside from clinical practice, the MD was more often cited as providing professional credibility, whereas the 40 to 50 percent of respondents said the MBA conveyed leadership, management, and business skills. Respondents said that the combination of degrees helped to inform their overall business and medical perspectives, supply multidisciplinary experience, and improve communication between the medical and business worlds. The study, one of the first to assess MD/MBA graduates' perceptions of how their training affected their career, is published online this week in advance of publication in the September issue of *Academic Medicine*.

"Our findings may have significant implications for current and future physician-managers as the landscape of [health care](#) continues to change," says lead author, Mitesh S. Patel, MD, MBA, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholar at Penn. "A study published in 2009 found that among 6,500 hospitals in the United States, only 235 were run by physicians. Moving forward, changing dynamics triggered by [national health care](#) reform will likely require leaders to have a better balance between clinical care and business savvy. Graduates with MD and MBA training could potentially fill this growing need within the sector."

The Wharton School has the oldest program in [health care management](#) of any leading business school in the nation. Based on a survey of graduates of that program who also hold an MD dating as far back as 1981, the study also found that MD/MBA holders increasingly assume leadership, management, and administrative positions as their careers advance and, as a result, are less involved in [clinical care](#). Specifically, in 2010, 46.2 percent of respondents who graduated in the 2000s reported clinical practice as their primary work sector, a figure which was higher than 39.5 percent for those who graduated in the 1990s, and 19.2 percent for respondents who graduated in the 1980s.

Less than 20 percent of respondents whose role is primarily non-clinical reported that "hospital administration" or "care-provider organization" was their primary work sector, indicating that although these physicians pursue leadership roles, most are not directly related to managing health systems or medical practices. Instead, they reported largely working in a variety of sectors such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, business start-up, venture capital, investment banking, hedge funds, marketing, consulting, government, insurance, managed care, philanthropy, and the non-profit world.

"Physicians with training in management are now an essential part of the health care workforce," said David A. Asch, MD, MBA, senior author and professor of Medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine and professor of Health Care Management at Wharton. "In 2014, we know that advances in health and health care are as likely to come from changes in the organization, management, and financing of health care as they are from fundamental discoveries from the basic sciences. We need all kinds of contributions to advance national goals in health."

Over the past two decades, the number of training programs offering the option of both an MD and MBA degree has increased fivefold, representing nearly 40 percent of U.S. medical schools as of 2010.

Penn's MBA program in health care management includes core MBA curriculum courses such as accounting, finance, marketing, and strategy as well as a range of courses in health economics, [management](#), and policy. There is also an immersive field application project where students are paired with health care companies to address real-world problems.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

Citation: Study shows changing roles of physicians with MBAs (2014, June 26) retrieved 29 March 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-06-roles-physicians-mbas.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.