

"Europeanization" of the Latvian paediatric curriculum

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Abstract

Medical education was founded in Latvia in 1919. Before the soviet occupation Latvia had a well developed university-type medical education conducted by high level faculty. Between 1939-1945 Latvia had lost the structure of university education established in 20 years of independence – the majority of professors emigrated or were dismissed. Soviet medical education was mostly directed by imported soviet academic staff with emphasis on the practical experience and early sub-specialization: paediatricians were trained at the Faculty of Paediatrics. Upon graduating after 6 years of medical studies, the level of education was satisfactory to start practice in primary care, in emergency services, or in secondary level of hospitals. The most important changes in health care organization and education after the restoration of independence were connected with the replacement of paediatricians by family doctors, centralizing and reducing the number of hospitals, and closing the Faculty of Paediatrics. Only 41% of former paediatricians

continued to work as paediatricians and 51% of them were older than 52. Students from the Medical Faculty interested in paediatrics were given an optional possibility to have an additional education in paediatrics during the 3rd-6th years of their studies with 841 contact hours in paediatrics (3 times more than in regular studies). For postgraduates, the minimal length of residency in paediatrics is 4 years, with a possibility to continue their education for a further 2 or 3 years in one of 10 subspecialties after an initial 3 years of specialization in paediatrics.

Unfortunately, the society is not satisfied with child health care because of the low availability of paediatricians.

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