

# **AUSTRALIA'S EXPERIENCE IN MEDICAL SCHOOL ACCREDITATION**

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# Outline

- **Historical background to medical school accreditation in Australia**
- **Role of the AMC**
- **Implementation of medical school accreditation**
- **Outcomes of medical school accreditation**
- **Issues and challenges**

# Historical Background

## **Until 1984:**

Undergraduate medical education based on UK models

Accreditation (for registration in Australia and UK)  
undertaken by UK General Medical Council

## **Since 1985:**

Australian Medical Council responsible for medical  
school accreditation and standard-setting

Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement functions

Subsequent authority across the continuum of medical  
education and training

# Role of Australian Medical Council

“To protect the public by ensuring the standards of medical practice in Australia”

Standard-setting body for medical education in Australia (and New Zealand) in 3 stages:

- 1. Medical schools\***
- 2. Internship training**
- 3. Specialist Colleges**

*\*Accreditation of medical school courses leads to eligibility of graduates for registration as a medical practitioner in Australia and NZ*

# Medical School Accreditation by AMC

- Accreditation of Australian and NZ medical schools since 1985
- Authority from Government
- Standards and processes aligned with international benchmarks (WFME-AMEWPR)
- Accreditation Committee reports to Directors
- Directors' decision released publicly, and determines eligibility of graduates for provisional registration by the Medical Board of Australia

# Success factors in implementation of medical school accreditation

- Based on accepted and well-defined standards
- Collegial operation
- Fair and impartial processes
- Respect for university autonomy
- Defensible decision-making
- Encouragement of diversity
- Stimulus to internal reform and innovation
- Dissemination of best practice around the nation

# Australia's Medical Schools

## **19 medical schools (all University-based):**

- 16 public, 1 private, 2 church affiliated
- Dispersed teaching sites – urban, rural, offshore
- 9 new schools since 2000

## **System of entry**

- Undergraduate: school results, medical admissions test and interview
- Postgraduate: undergraduate degree, graduate medical admissions test and interview

# Current medical schools

<b>Entry Type</b>	<b>No. of Schools</b>
4 Year Graduate	9
5 Year Undergraduate	5
6 Year Undergraduate	5
Lateral Entry pathways	2

<b>Main Educational Methods</b>	<b>No. of Schools</b>
Problem-Based Learning	11
Case-Based Learning	2
Mixture Problem-Based and Case-Based Learning	1
Other	7



# Principles of Basic Medical Education

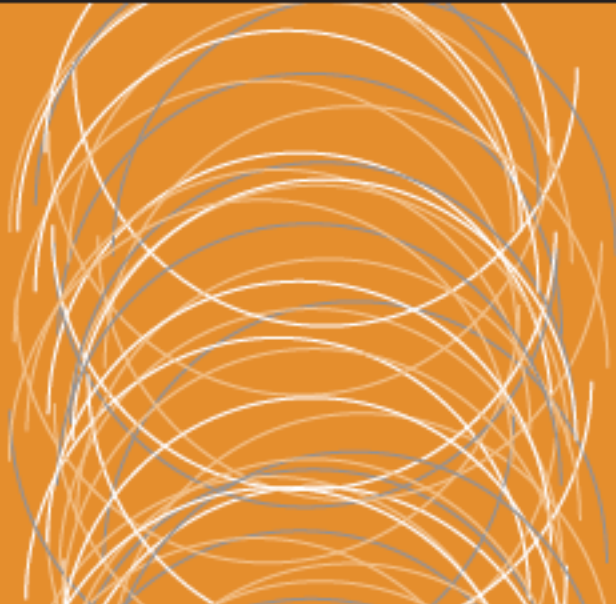
AMC criteria for accreditation:

- Achievement of **Graduate Outcomes** in 4 domains -
  - Science and Scholarship
  - Clinical Practice
  - Health and Society
  - Professionalism and Leadership
- **Standards** for medical schools and medical courses, in 8 broad groups (aligns with WFME)

Australian Medical Council Limited

Standards for Assessment and Accreditation  
of Primary Medical Programs  
by the Australian Medical Council 2012

AMC



# Accreditation procedures

Accreditation involves a rigorous process of assessment against set criteria and defined standards for:

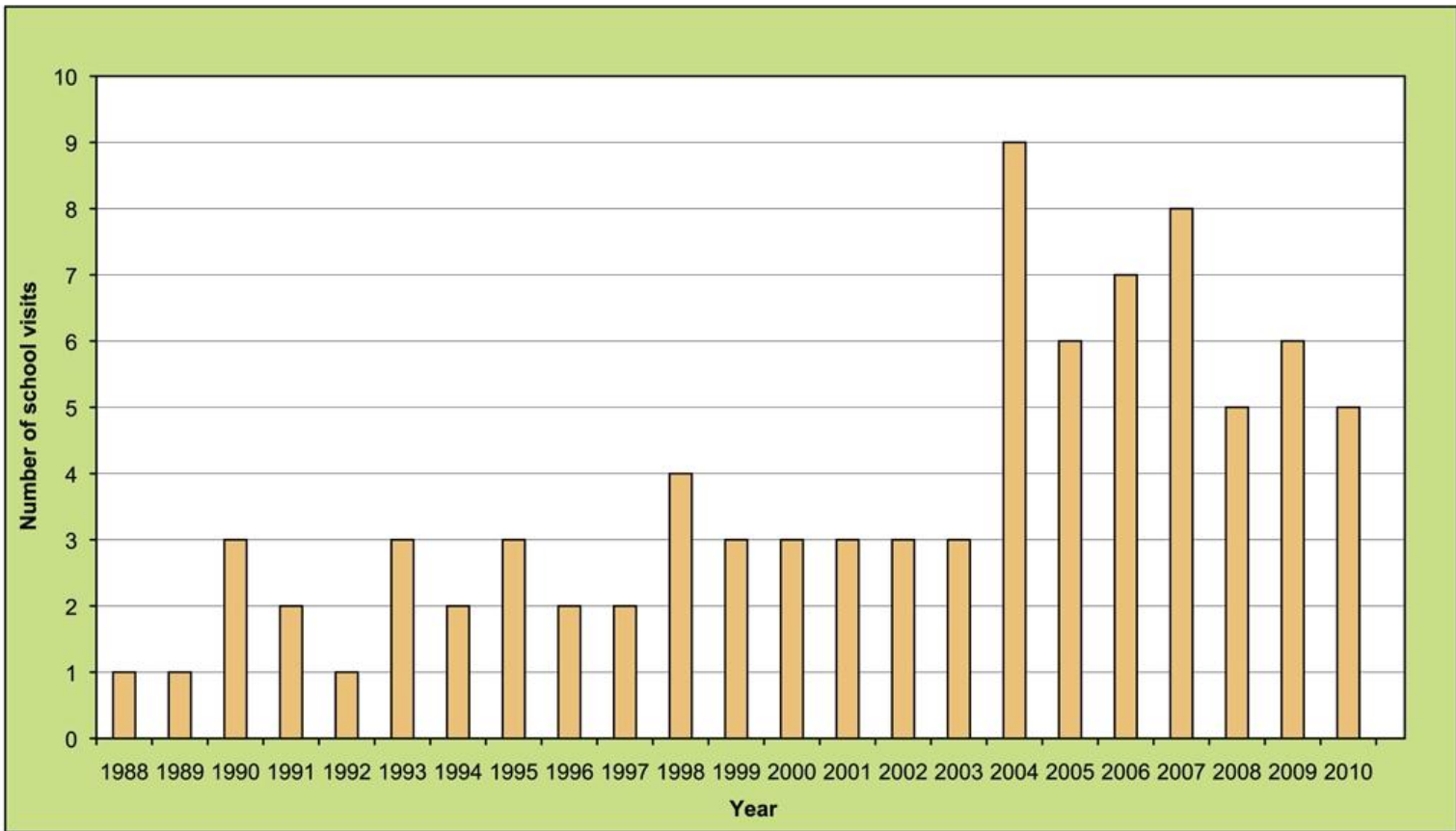
- Existing medical schools
- Major changes to existing courses
- New schools

# New medical schools

Growth in Australian medical schools:

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2012</u>
<b>Medical schools</b>	11	18	19
<b>Graduates*</b>	1,200	2,500	3,000

\* incl. international students (~ 20%)



Number of medical school visits per year, 1988 - 2010

# Accreditation outcomes

- **Established schools:**
  - Full accreditation, no conditions 17
  - Accreditation +/- conditions 20
  
- **Major course changes:**
  - Two-stage assessments 16
  
- **New schools:**
  - Three-stage assessments completed 8
  
- Advisory teams to assist schools:
  - Established schools 2
  - New schools 4

# Typical recommendations and outcomes of accreditation

- Reduce curriculum overload
- Better integration of curriculum
- Greater focus on active student-centered learning (especially through small-group formats)
- Greater focus on teaching clinical communication skills, with early patient contact
- Reduced student assessment load and more diverse assessment methods
- Stronger role for community practice experience
- More focus on population health and EBM
- Explicit attention to personal and professional development

# Medical schools undergoing major changes

## Definition of “Major Change”:

- Change in the length or format of the course
- Substantial change in educational philosophy, objectives, emphasis or institutional setting
- Substantial change in student numbers relative to resources
- Changes forced by a major reduction in resources



# Medical schools undergoing major changes

Some major changes proposed by Australian /NZ  
medical schools:

	<u>No. of schools</u>
• Change from 6 year undergrad to 5 year undergrad	2
• Change from 6 year undergrad to 4 year graduate-entry	3
• Introduction of 'lateral' graduate-entry stream	3
• Introduction of a new site of course delivery in A-NZ	3
• Introduction of offshore course delivery (full/part)	2
• Introduction of joint program between two universities	1
• Major change to curriculum/course structure	4

# **New medical schools**

## **Expansion of medical school capacity**

A response to inadequate medical workforce in relation to community growth, increasing demand and population distribution

## **Australian Government actions:**

- Increased places in existing schools
- New schools in areas of need
- Establishment of rural clinical schools

# Issues for new schools

1. Academic staffing
2. Clinical experience
3. Research component
4. Adequacy of resources
5. Postgraduate training and employment

# Challenges for AMC accreditation program

- The financial cost of accreditation: who pays?
- The opportunity cost of accreditation: how much time and effort?
- Maintaining the quality of teams and secretariat
- Dealing with increasing diversity in course models
- Producing evidence for the benefit of accreditation
- Expanding contribution to regional and global development in medical education