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From the margins to centrality in accountability and accreditation: Global health and aboriginal health education programs

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Purpose: Recent demands for social accountability and responsibility, service learning in accreditation standards, reflective practice and advocacy, and community engagement all require that medical education programs provide students with a range of learning opportunities both within and outside the formal curriculum. This research addresses the centrality of programs such as Global Health and Aboriginal health to the core values of medical education at Memorial University. While established at the margins of mainstream undergraduate medical education, we will show that these programs are key to preparing medical practitioners to meet the needs of the communities they serve and to contribute to health equity both at home and abroad. **Methods:** We describe areas where Aboriginal Health and Global Health programs promote “civic professionalism” described by the Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada (AFMC) in 2010. Using Boelen and Wollard’s (2009) framework of conceptualization, production and usability as key measures of social responsibility and accountability, we evaluate our program contributions. **Results:** The Aboriginal Health Initiative and the Global Health Office have created community-engaged actions through (1) Conceptualization: student mentorship opportunities and the Friendship Circle; summer institutes in Labrador and abroad; goals of these experiences -- to build awareness and cultural competencies and to promote diversity in the health sciences professions; (2) Production: service learning in partnership with community organizations; journal clubs and film series; hosting speakers on issues around health and social justice; and (3) Usability: hosting opportunities for students to present on activities; providing opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences, and thereby, promoting the lifelong skill of reflective practice. **Conclusions:** The programs in Global Health and Aboriginal Health are integral to the values, objectives, and goals promoted in the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial. Through contributions in service learning, in community engagement and advocacy training, these programs encourage consistent reflective practice by making links between core curriculum and extra-curricular or para-curricular activities.