Practicing General Internal Medicine in the Age of Specialisation

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An Internist is a specialist trained in the diagnosis and treatment of a broad range of diseases in adults involving all organ systems, and is proficient in the medical management of patients who have undifferentiated or multi-system disease processes. An Internist cares for hospitalized and ambulatory patients and may play a role in teaching or research.

Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
General Internal Medicine Specialists

• Specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the **diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults** across the spectrum from health to complex illness

• Prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases that affect adults

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Expertise of the general internist

• Internists are equipped to deal with whatever problem a patient brings -- no matter how common or rare, or how simple or complex.

• They are specially trained to solve puzzling diagnostic problems and can handle severe chronic illnesses and situations where several different illnesses may strike at the same time.

• They also bring to patients an understanding of wellness (disease prevention and the promotion of health), women's health, substance abuse, mental health, as well as effective treatment of common problems of the eyes, ears, skin, nervous system and reproductive organs.

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We need internists ..... 

• Ageing population
• Chronic diseases
• Co-morbidities
• Increasing complexity of disease and presentation

• Broad based knowledge and experience
• Provide holistic care
• Coordinate care
Who manages this patient?

- 67 yr old male admitted from ED for non-specific symptoms; feeling unwell for 2 weeks, decreased appetite, non productive cough. Background of hypertension, IHD, DM, COPD and mild CVA with good recovery of function, GERD.
What patients want and expect

• One contact person
  – Assessment & evaluation
  – Explanation & communication
  – Coordinate care
  – Gatekeeping role
  – Followup care
What medicine is lacking today

• Need for more general (internist) physicians
  – Well rounded clinicians
  – Broad & deep understanding of medicine
  – Holistic approach to patient care
  – Not an organ specialist
  – Not a procedurist
  – Not a person to order more tests
The old days......

• The master clinician
• Overflowing with knowledge and wisdom
• Great teacher
• Always held in respect
The pursuit of internal medicine

• Influence of role models
• Aspiration for knowledge
• Challenges of clinical medicine
• Personal satisfaction
Declining interest in general internal medicine

- Rapid expansion of knowledge
- Procedural medicine
- Heavy workload
- Long work hours
- Lack of glamour
- Unrewarding
- Unexciting
- Laid back?
Improving conditions and opportunities

• Better remuneration
  – Fair compensation for time and effort
  – Reduce gap with specialties

• Better working hours

• Recognition
  – Awards
  – Role models

• Creating opportunities for career development
  – Leadership
  – Education
  – Quality improvement
  – Research
• Limiting positions for specialty training
• Mandatory internal medicine training prior to specialty training
• Obligatory period of service for IM every year to maintain competency
General Medicine Training

• Acute Care Common Stem
• Generic curriculum for medical specialties
  – Symptom competencies
  – System specific competencies
  – Investigation competencies
  – Procedural competencies
Training pathway for physicians

2 years
Foundation training
FY1/2

Selection

2 years
Core medical training (CMT)
or Acute Care Common Stem (ACCS)
CT 1/2 or ST 1/2

Selection

4–6 years
Specialty training
ST3+

Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT)

Knowledge-based assessment
MRCP (UK) Examination

Workplace-based assessment (WPBA)
Specialty Certificate Examinations (SCEs)

WPBA throughout training to continually gather evidence of learning and provide formative feedback
• Residency in Internal Medicine
  – 3 year programme
  – ABIM exam / equivalent
  – Practice IM in hospital or outpatient setting
  – Apply for subspecialty training

• Core training in internal medicine provided

• Maintain competency and practice for doctors opting for specialty training
Being an internist in the midst of specialists

• Outnumbered
• Uphold the value of being an internist
• Role model
• Increase awareness of IM to students and residents; inspire interest
• Someone will notice
Thank you for your attention