

# Rural Canada Needs More Generalist Physicians (and the rest of Canada too)

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## Workshop Objectives

- Identify key changes necessary in medical education and the health system to support generalism and increase generalists
- Develop strategies for rural generalists to influence medical education and the health delivery system



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## Workshop Outline

- Welcome and Introductions
- Short presentation on generalism
- Exploration of medical education and health system changes to support generalism

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## What do you mean by Generalism?

## Why is Generalism Important?

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## Generalism

**Generalism\*** is a professional philosophy of practice, distinguished by a commitment to holistic, integrated, person-centred care, the broadest scope of practice within each discipline and collaboration with the larger health care team in order to respond to patient and community health needs.

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## Generalist Physician

1. Takes a holistic approach to patient care, i.e. acknowledges the multidimensional aspects associated with patients and patient care including the context of her/his family and the wider social environment.
2. Uses this perspective as part of their clinical method and therapeutic approach to all clinical encounters.
3. Is able to deal with the widest range of unselected patients and undifferentiated conditions.
4. Takes responsibility for the continuity of people's care over time to support and promote healthy outcomes.

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## Generalist Physician (cont'd)

*5. Coordinates care as needed across disciplines and between organizations, within and between health and social care.*

*6. Uses their adaptive expertise to handle clinical uncertainty, think creatively and solve challenging and atypical situations.*

\*Definition adapted from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the Royal College of General Practitioners in the UK

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## Rural Practitioners

### “Extended Generalists”

- wide range of services
- high level of clinical responsibility
- relative professional isolation
- specific community health role

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# Rural Generalist Medicine

“broad scope of medical care  
in the rural context”

- comprehensive primary care
- in-patient and/or secondary care
- emergency care
- extended service to sustain local health services among network of colleagues
- population health approach
- ‘system of care’ aligned and responsive to community needs

Cairns Consensus 2014



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**The Future of Medical Education in Canada (FMEC): A Collective Vision for MD Education**  
An AFMC project

**THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION IN CANADA: POSTGRADUATE PROJECT**  
L'AVENIR DE L'ÉDUCATION MÉDICALE AU CANADA: PROJET POSTGRADUATE  
A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION IN CANADA

2012

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA FACULTY OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY

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## Valuing Generalism

- generalism is foundational for all doctors
- undergraduate education must focus on broadly based generalist content including comprehensive family medicine
- family physicians...must be integral participants in all stages of undergraduate education

FMEC MD Vision 2010



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PGME COLLABORATIVE  
GOVERNANCE COUNCIL



CONSEIL DE GOUVERNANCE  
COLLABORATIVE DE L'EMPO

## Generalism Working Group

- Graduates to meet communities health needs
  - training where graduates expected to practice
  - learning adaptability to meet community needs
  - subspecialty residents to acquire generalist competencies
- Culture shift
  - Valuing generalists as key to socially accountable health system
  - explore cultures of generalists and specialists to strengthen understanding and collaboration



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# Professional Competency

“the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and the community being served”.

Epstein & Hundert, JAMA 2002



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Develop specific examples of implementing Generalism education and health system change

Explore the potential contribution of the Rural Generalist Pathway



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## NOSM Student Perspective

- Generalism in rural practice is
  - not an alternative to urban specialist care
  - explicit provision of quality healthcare within geographic, demographic and cultural context, and human and material resource constraints of rural communities
- NOSM experience shapes career choices
  - speciality, practice scope and location

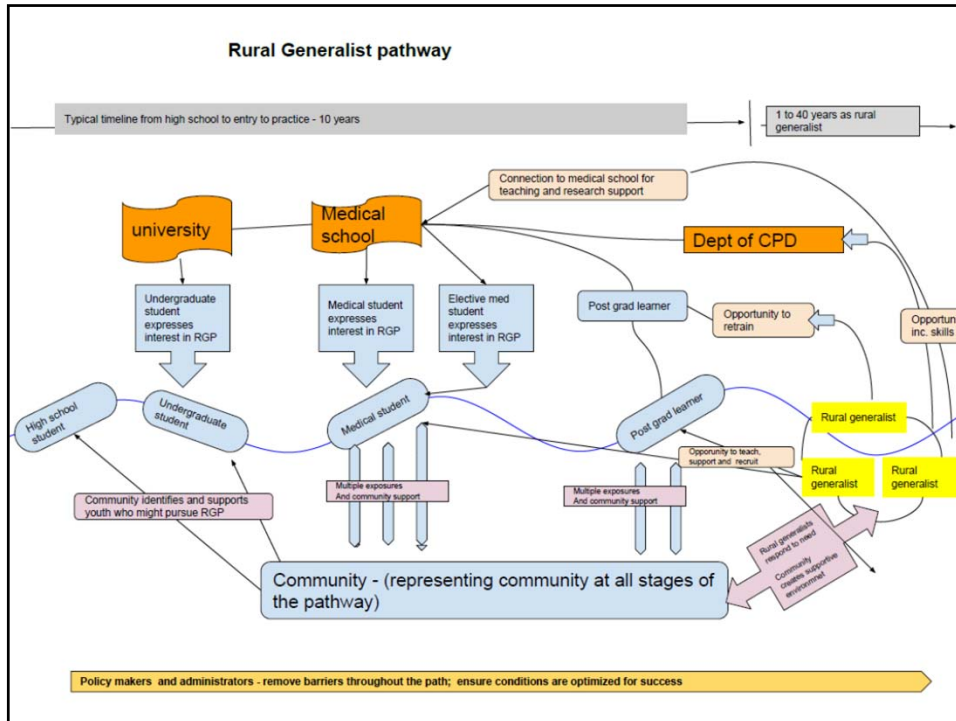
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## Rural Generalist Pathway

- rural high school health careers camps
- rural led selection process
- prolonged rural undergraduate  
clinical learning
- rural based postgraduate training
- rural enhanced skills training
- rural CME/CPD

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## Important Enablers of Generalism Education

- challenge conventional wisdom
- focus on peoples' health needs
- context is critical
  - active community participation
  - generalist clinical services
- generalism role models
- standards and quality
- vision, mission and values

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## References

- Strasser R. Delivering on Social Accountability: Canada's Northern Ontario School of Medicine. *The Asia-Pacific Scholar*. 2016; 1(1): 1-6
- Cheu H. The Rural Challenge and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, 2015: [https://youtu.be/gU3LE3vPt\\_4](https://youtu.be/gU3LE3vPt_4)
- Strasser R, et al. Community engagement: A central feature of NOSM's socially accountable distributed medical education *CMEJ*. 2018; 9(1): e33-e43
- Strasser R, Cheu H. The Needs of the Many: NOSM Students' Experience of Generalism and Rural Practice. *Can Fam Physician* 2018; 64: 449-455.