



Exploring the Educational Impacts of NOSM: Graduates Stories of Curriculum and Community

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ABSTRACT (300 words):

In Canada, socially accountable medical education has been identified as a key direction for improving the inequitable distribution of physicians in Canada. While there are now medical schools in Canada with specific social accountability mandates and there is early evidence that such schools are positively impacting their rural health systems, published research that examines *how* such programs are effectively preparing students with the competencies, attitudes, and identities to practice in rural settings is limited.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is one of Canada's newest medical schools founded upon a mandate of social accountability and served as a case study for this study. This purpose of the study was to explore and better understand the educational impacts of the NOSM approach on graduates from the first four classes. In total 28 participants completed semi-structured interviews and answered questions about career paths, their preparedness for rural and northern practice, challenges they have faced, and future career aspirations. From the data four key themes emerged. First, no *one* curricular element stands out, rather the curriculum in its entirety is personhood building. Second, longitudinal community exposure can support holistic views of patients and systems. Third, social accountability fosters strong social expectations and graduates feel schools have a role to play in addressing physician needs. Lastly, place-focused education builds alliances that extend to practice and connect people through agency and communities of practice. These findings contribute to the literature on social accountability and rural medical education as they identify specific strengths of the NOSM curriculum as well as they point to opportunities to strengthen its educational and professional support programs.