

Refiguring Community Medicine in the premedical curriculum

Including Community Health Functions in the training of doctors in Sierra Leone

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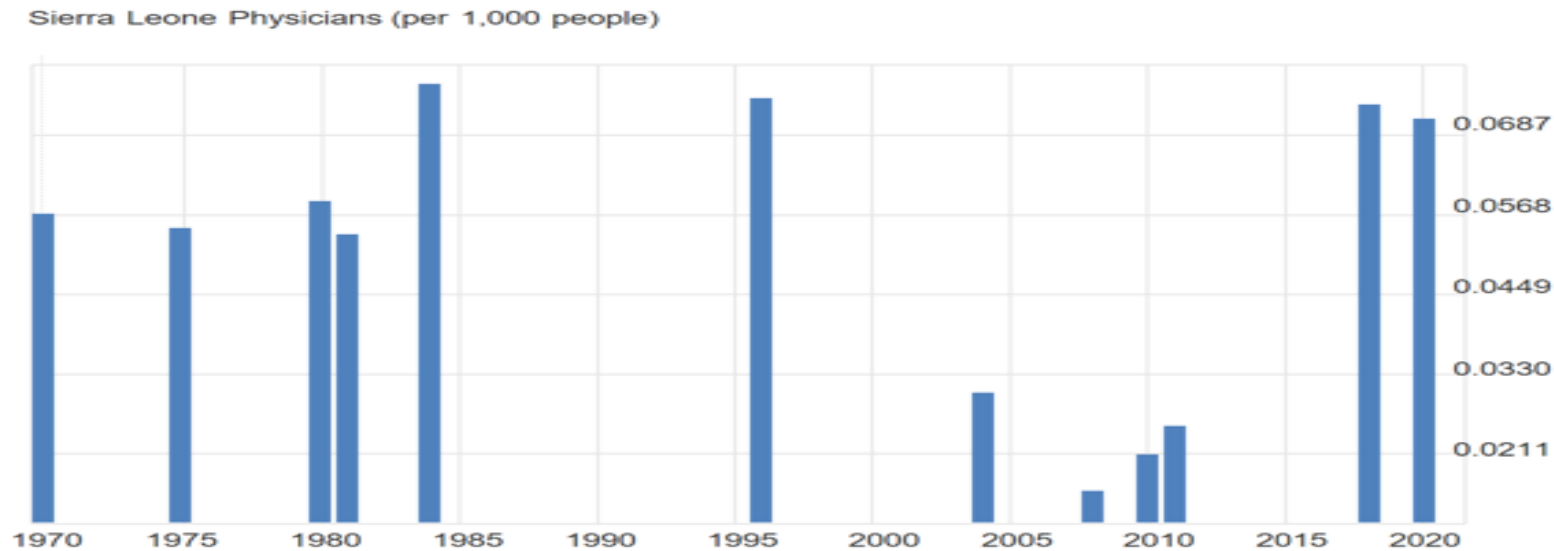


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BACKGROUND

- ❖ Physicians (per 1,000 people) in Sierra Leone was reported at 0.07 in 2020, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources.

Sierra Leone - Physicians - actual values, historical data, forecasts and projections sourced from the [World Bank](#).



Source: tradingeconomics.com | World Bank

Development of medical schools

- ▶ **COMHAS** is the first medical school in Sierra Leone after it was founded on the 12th of April 1988 by the government of Sierra Leone with support from the Nigerian Government and the WHO.
- ▶ **COMAHS** has a primary mandate to produce doctors, nurses, pharmacists, biomedical scientists and laboratory technicians with a view of improving the health care delivery system in Sierra Leone.
- ▶ A good number of doctors produced at COMHAS either leave the country or stay in the city to work.
- ▶ Health care facilities (district hospitals) have got no doctors.

THE UNIVERSITY ACT OF 2005

- ▶ Creation of another medical school at **Njala University**, Sierra Leone can expand its educational infrastructure, accommodate more students, and produce a larger number of doctors each year.
- ▶ The capacity for training medical doctors has always been limited in the face of a steady population increase and the ever-growing need for healthcare personnel.



Geographic challenges & the need for a pre-med curriculum

- ▶ Sierra Leone is a country with diverse geographic regions, including rural and remote areas.
- ▶ Creating a premedical program at Njala university, preferably in an underserved or rural area, can help address the issue of healthcare accessibility.
- ▶ It would allow students from those regions to pursue medical education without having to travel long distances, potentially encouraging them to return and serve their communities after graduation.

Background of the Pre-med Curriculum at Njala

- ▶ The Premedical Program at Njala University marks a significant milestone as the first-ever roll-out of the Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery degree program at the university.
- ▶ This program, offered by the School of Medicine, is designed to provide aspiring medical students with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for their journey towards becoming competent and compassionate healthcare professionals.

COMMUNITY HEALTH MEDICINE

Aims, Purpose and Challenges

- ▶ To train medical students with knowledge, attitude and skills required to become doctors with empathy, love, who can effectively function as healthcare providers.
- ▶ The success of a health worker is not just related to knowledge, but to **AWARENESS and attitude**. Awareness that childhood diarrhoea arises from unhygienic food or fluid intake should not be content with treating individual children.
- ▶ It should **spur action**: health education, improved environmental sanitation and water supplies. S/he will soon realize that change can only come by working with the community.
- ▶ Motivating them towards community health presents **challenges** as the rewards are long term and not obvious without statistical records.

Student outcomes of the training

At the end of the course in community medicine graduating students should be able to:

- Approach a community through its recognized leaders in an appropriate manner.
- Identify community features and write a Community Profile.
- Should be able to understand pattern of disease in the community in statistical terms.
- Collate data into a Community Diagnosis.
- Design and use a variety of methods to communicate effectively with individuals and groups.
- Participate with or initiate community based rehabilitation
- Understand the objectives, strategies, implementation monitoring and evaluation of all National Health Programmes.

Other expected outcomes

- ▶ **Improved learning experiences:** Njala University to create better learning experiences for students by engaging with the community.
- ▶ **Enhanced research outcomes:** Community engagement leading to improved research outcomes.
- ▶ **Sustainable development:** help amplify the impact of initiatives, leading to more effective and sustainable development. (One hundred acres of land already provided for the construction of teaching hospital and other structures by land owners). Community stakeholders presently lobbying government for the construction of a five hundred bed hospital.
- ▶ **Student growth:** Students can develop a sense of social responsibility and make a positive impact by participating in community-based initiatives.
- ▶ **Professional growth:** Students gaining hands-on experience and skills that can help them stand out to hiring managers.