

## UEMO Policy Statement

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### Introduction

Medical education is expensive to individuals and to society, and the medical skills produced and acquired can ill afford to be wasted. The medical workforce in all the countries of UEMO is rapidly changing, particularly in respect of the numbers of women in the medical profession, especially in general practice, and of those wanting to work less than a traditional full time commitment. The aspirations of the younger generations of doctors, both men and women, are changing with a major and possibly accelerating change towards flexible and part time training and working. The profession must recognise that these aspirations do not reflect a lack of commitment to medicine or to patients and must be accommodated if maximum use is to be made of scarce medical skills.

UEMO recognises that, although they are of great and increasing importance, equal opportunities issues are not just gender issues and that discrimination and disadvantage on the grounds of:

- Race
- Religion
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

are all particular problem areas where continuing action is needed to build on the progress which has been made, in the profession, within the countries represented in UEMO.

#### Valuing - a necessary culture change

The equal opportunities legislation in place in many countries may help create the legal framework in which true equality of opportunity may eventually become a reality- It cannot, however, substitute for a climate in which doctors welcome each other as colleagues and value their commitment and contribution to

medicine and to their patients, even when those doctors may be from differing traditions, cultures and organisational structures and may work under differing contractual arrangements.

It must be a responsibility of all individual doctors and of all national and European medical organisations to work towards a culture that respects, values and accommodates such differences.

The profession also needs to work towards facilitating entry into medical school for those with disabilities and of helping colleagues who develop disabilities e.g. post accident, CVA, development of inflammatory joint problems etc. back into post- The great value the special insights doctors with such experience can provide for patients and for colleagues need to be harnessed-

### **UEMO Policy on Equal Opportunities**

UEMO is adamant that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of:

- Race
- Religion
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Contractual arrangement
- Social status
- Economic disadvantage

UEMO further recognises that other factors, as yet unidentified, may in time become issues requiring inclusion in the above list.

## Particular issues:

### 1. Entry to medical school

- ?? At the level of undergraduate recruitment, whilst maintaining the academic standards required of doctors, there is a need to work towards recruiting doctors who reflect the gender ethnic and economic profile of society.
- ?? Consideration should be given to the encouragement and use of role models from minority groups before university entrance

### 2. Undergraduate curriculum

- In all medical schools the curriculum should include equal opportunities awareness training (see end note) including specific training on how to utilise anti-discrimination legislation when faced with discrimination-

### 3. Post graduate education (CME/CPD)

- Is a priority need, and a professional obligation, for all doctors. Access to the resources to permit participation must be on the basis of educational need and free from any discrimination
- Resources for 'return to medicine' courses (preparation for return after a career break) must be identified and allocated fairly
- Mentoring and other support schemes should be available on the basis only of the need of the individual doctor for them
- Should include on-going equal opportunities awareness training including specific training on how to utilise anti-discrimination legislation when faced with discrimination.

### 4. Employment

- ?? The need to maintain a balance between men **and** women and to give equal opportunities to minority groups dictates that appointments to posts should be purely on the basis of a proper job description, person specification and the subsequent selection, in open competition, of the individual best qualified and suited to the post.
- ?? Selection procedures should be arranged to minimise the possibility of discrimination, for example anonymising by

removing indications of gender and ethnicity from application forms and CVs before circulation.

?? Attention is needed to some particular problem areas:

- > The need to maintain a balance between men and women in both specialist and generalist practice. Any drift, for example, a drift towards a predominantly female workforce in general practice and a predominantly male workforce in specialist practice, would be worrying because the continuing Institutionalised sexism of the outside world will tend to mean that this will result in falling status for general practice
- > The need for fast-track additional training for doctors who are refugees and asylum seekers but who are unable to practice because their medical education is not recognised by the regulatory authority in the country in which they are now resident.
- > Doctors working in difficult and challenging circumstances, for example in areas of socio-economic deprivation or extreme rural isolation, should be supported in doing so.

## 5. 'Benefits'

- All employment benefits, including

- > Remuneration levels

- > Holiday allowance

- > Maternity benefits

- > Pension scheme provisions

- > Sickness and retirement arrangements

- > Access to childcare facilities, maternity and paternity

leave, and religious holidays,

Must be free of discrimination

- And there must be fairness in practice in giving notice of termination/cancellation of contracts etc.

## **Action Plan:**

### **UEMO calls for action:**

1. To ensure that both women and men practitioners achieve appropriate representation within the national medical associations and within UEMO itself.
2. To encourage national medical associations to prioritise this issue and to monitor and to report regularly on all national health service structures and strategies to ensure that there is no hidden discrimination acting against the fair treatment of any group of doctors.
3. To encourage the different medical organisations in Europe (**ESGP, UEMS, PWG, CP** etc) to prioritise equal opportunities issues and to cooperate with them in that work.
- 4 To maintain a Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities in the UEMO which, together with the Presidency of the UEMO, shall actively disseminate this policy document to the national and the European medical associations and seek regular reports on progress.
5. Encourage the national and European medical associations to look at:
  - a> Discriminatory salary and pension differences
    - To Inform and advise members on salary-issues and to encourage them to make direct contact for advice when they seek a new job,
    - To support networking of all doctors from disadvantaged minority groups,
  - b) Working conditions and working **hours**
    - To actively support colleagues who wish to work part-time or to job share or who want to take parental leave.
    - To encourage the development and implementation of re-Induction facilities (return to medicine courses).
  - c) Career development

- To ensure that all doctors choose their line of work within the profession based on their aptitude, ability and interest and that traditions and practical obstacles do not hinder them.
  - To support competence development in areas such as administration and leadership for all doctors.
- d) The elimination of sexist language from all contracts and other documentation
- e) The gender distribution within the medical profession
- To support moves towards achieving a gender balance in the decision making bodies of the profession which mirrors that in the profession as a whole
- f) To continue to monitor for new areas of discrimination as they develop and to take appropriate action.

**Note:**

**Equal opportunities awareness training**

Is an educational programme already available in several countries. It is aimed at helping professionals, especially those involved in selection procedures, to be aware of the possibly of residual prejudice translating itself into discrimination to the disadvantage of, usually, minority groups.