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Platinum Opinion Editorial

Challenging the Urologist of the Future: Time for a Change?

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1. Introduction

The fast pace of the 21st century presents unique challenges, especially in fields such as medicine in which adaptability is key. Physicians must possess both medical expertise and diverse skills for effective patient care. Reflecting on these challenges, we must ask how we confront future uncertainties. Carefully considered solutions are required. Luckily, a new generation of urologists is poised to tackle these challenges. To aid in this endeavour, we outline six thought-provoking points to guide us forward.

2. Social intelligence in patient care and empowering informed patients

Social intelligence is crucial for physicians working with diverse patient populations, each with their unique needs and expectations. The development of skills such as empathy, communication abilities, and cultural awareness not only strengthens the bond between patient and doctor but also enhances collaboration with health care partners [1]. Continuous refinement of these interpersonal skills is essential; they enable physicians to simplify complex medical information, provide educational materials, and foster open dialogue, all of which help in shared decision-making and in effectively addressing patient concerns. Traditionally underemphasised in medical education, robust social skills are now recognised as indispensable for maintaining effective physician-patient relationships [2]. Policymakers should acknowledge the benefits of investing in social intelligence, which leads to better clinical outcomes and reduces medicolegal risks.

3. Advances in medical education and residency

Continuous medical education is vital in staying abreast of rapid advances in technology, surgery, and treatments.

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Health care professionals invest significant time in refining their technical skills in response to emerging innovations. Embracing innovative educational methods enhances learning experiences and ensures ongoing proficiency. Regular evaluation of teaching methods minimises learning curves, enabling practitioners to gain expertise before encountering real-world scenarios. Moving beyond rote learning to integrated skill acquisition fosters true mastery [3]. Residency programmes should focus on equipping future urologists for continuous growth, balancing foundational knowledge with opportunities for self-development. This approach facilitates diverse strategies for addressing complex clinical, surgical, and scientific challenges, emphasising true subspecialisation in the expanding field of urology.

4. Physician wellbeing and self-care

Physician wellbeing and self-care are often overlooked but are crucial for optimal clinical performance. Urological residents, for instance, often face sleep issues, unhealthy diets, and insufficient exercise, increasing their risk of burnout [4]. Prioritisation of personal wellbeing does not compromise patient care but enhances relationships, akin to fitting one's own oxygen mask before assisting others during an in-flight emergency. Long hours, high-stake decisions, and emotional strain can lead to burnout without proper resilience strategies. Implementation of strategies for self-care, stress management, and work-life balance is crucial for physicians to manage workplace stress, encourage reflection and social activities, and prioritise health despite career demands [5]. Supporting resilience, destigmatising mental health, and recognising the benefits of physical exercise are essential to fostering a culture of work-life balance. Ultimately, the importance of self-care is not about affordability but rather the necessity of preventing its neglect [6].

5. Strategic planning for implementation of technology

In our interconnected world, collaborative organisations can lead by example, driving comprehensive processes forward. A technical and analytical mindset is crucial for effective integration of future technologies. To maximize impact, it is vital to pinpoint specific areas in urology for which technology can boost efficiency, diagnostics, and patient care. Involvement of key stakeholders ensures alignment with needs, while collaborative approaches streamline implementation and minimise errors. With pressure to cut costs, discussions about financial implications and environmental impacts are essential. Notwithstanding these pressures, reducing the environmental impact and carbon emissions of medicine overall must be at the forefront of our daily practice to ensure the world is not in a worse place than when we started [7]. Urologists have shown a knack for rapid adaptation, and AI represents the next frontier in diagnostics, treatment planning, and patient management. However, careful consideration of the limitations and ethical concerns surrounding AI integration is imperative.

6. Specialisation and collaboration

Our focus for the future should prioritise depth over breadth, acknowledging the need for specialisation in the complex field of urology. Specialisation allows individuals to cultivate deep expertise in specific areas, while collaboration with colleagues who have complementary skills becomes increasingly crucial. Identifying and honing core competencies keeps practitioners informed of advances while maintaining their subspecialty expertise and general counselling abilities. Breaking down silos and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration is essential for holistic patient care. Regular interdisciplinary meetings facilitate knowledge exchange and a comprehensive understanding of complex cases [8]. An emphasis on team-based care fosters effective communication and shared decision-making among health care professionals. Advances in research technology and industry collaboration can accelerate development and improve the efficiency of patient care. Mentorship programmes sponsored by leading organisations provide opportunities for skill development. Reconsideration of training standards ensures that surgeons are equipped not only to operate but also to teach, challenging outdated distinctions and promoting excellence in clinical practice, education, and research.

7. Leadership skills in urology

Future urologists must possess advanced leadership skills to effectively navigate multidisciplinary teams, allocate health care resources efficiently, and champion patient-centred care. Leadership entails collaborative decision-making, adaptability, and an ability to inspire and motivate teams [9]. With growing diversity in urology teams, leadership dynamics require a fresh perspective. Young urologists need enhanced skills in collaborative decision-making, managing diverse teams, and inspiring individuals from different backgrounds. Leadership begins with clinical excellence and extends to contributions to research and innovation. Mentorship programmes and inclusive networking opportunities are crucial for nurturing future leaders and eliminating inequalities. Policymakers and health care systems should prioritise the development of leadership skills as integral components of a clinician's role, without compromising personal wellbeing. Encouraging a balanced approach to professional growth that values personal fulfilment alongside achievements is essential, and should discourage a culture of relentless career advancement.

8. Conclusions

To address the evolving challenges in urology and foster the development of future leaders, a practical solution could involve the establishment of comprehensive programmes led by major organisations. These programmes could shape the future of urology by equipping emerging talents with advanced training, mentorship, and collaboration in research, innovation, and leadership, fostering a culture of continuous learning and interdisciplinary cooperation. There is no straightforward guidance on how to navigate

these issues. However, if we succeed in cultivating a cadre of open-minded, highly adaptive, and socially intelligent urologists who actively collaborate in our field, the future holds great promise.

Conflicts of interest: The authors have nothing to disclose.

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