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Doctors as Agents of Health Equity: The Future of Medicine Is in Our Hands

EDITORIAL

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ABSTRACT

The British Student Doctor Journal (BSDJ) has launched its 2026 issue with an editorial from our Editor-in-Chief, exploring why doctors should be agents of health equity and their moral obligation to advance this work through both clinical practice and broader advocacy. It also highlights the importance for trainees to recognise the powerful agency inherent in academic freedom, and to use the research and advocacy published in scholarly journals to help drive change at a scalable, system-wide level.

Editorial

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DOCTORS AS AGENTS OF HEALTH EQUITY: THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE IS IN OUR HANDS

Doctors should be agents of health equity – a statement that still provokes momentary quarrels among healthcare professionals and academics.

These reservations are an unfortunate by-product of how medicine is taught, practised and disseminated, where fear of escalating concerns to authorities can override our willingness to engage in advocacy that promotes health equity. Yet, as outlined in the UK General Medical Council's *Good Medical Practice*, it remains our moral obligation as doctors to advance health equity through both our clinical practice and wider advocacy efforts. (1)

As trainees, we are taught that any form of inequity should be challenged professionally. In that vein, research and healthcare should also be questioned wherever inequity persists. However, why might medical students and resident doctors be afraid to have such conversations? Some may argue that our current healthcare systems do not provide meaningful opportunities to engage in and influence higher-level decision-making, such as policy and social action that drive system-level change. (2)

At *The British Student Doctor Journal*, we are committed to supporting doctors as agents of change, as the future of medicine lies in our hands. Therefore, it is important for trainees to recognise the powerful agency inherent in academic freedom, which can be used to advance health equity at scale. (3) Research and advocacy efforts are essential for identifying and understanding where health inequity lies, but without system-level action, they can become meaningless.

Journals, in that regard, play a significant role in facilitating academic freedom by bringing these urgent issues to our attention and providing a platform for academics to communicate with those in influential decision-making positions, such as policy-makers and institutional leaders within our healthcare systems.

In support of these efforts, *The British Student Doctor Journal* has introduced three new article sections: Reviews, Ward Round, and Medicine Meets Policy, creating additional opportunities for trainees to share their scholarly work or advocacy efforts within the wider academic discourse.

To strengthen the pipeline of clinician-scientists, we have also expanded our peer reviewer training, academic publishing workshops, networking events, and initiatives to identify and support emerging talent in academic medicine. Most importantly, we will continue to reflect on how we can promote equity within our journal through our policies, and we always welcome feedback from our readership to help us in achieving this goal.

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