

The History of Family Medicine in Egypt
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This paper traces our history from the mid-1970s to the present time, looks at our history in the context of the development of family medicine practice and education in Egypt. We are the product of that history and we stand on the shoulders of many who made Family Medicine possible. History does not just explain the past but also, by providing the framework for understanding the present, helps us to move forward. As Dr. Stephens, the great founder of our specialty said: "Medicine is always the child of its time and cannot escape being influenced and shaped by contemporary ideas and social trends" We will look at the birth and growth of Family Medicine teaching and practice, some of the obstacles and challenges found along the path as well as at the hopes and strategies for the future.

I- A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The 1978: Declaration of Alma-Ata proposed a set of PRINCIPLES for primary health care. As the new century began, there was a strong sense that medical practices in Egypt were far behind from those of European countries, particularly England and Germany, concerned about the state of medical education.

1976 and 1978: The need to establish more family medicine departments inside the Egyptian medical schools was much highlighted in both the first and the second Medical Education Conferences in Al-Fayoum in 1976 and 1978 respectively. These conferences were attended by members of medical syndicate, Supreme council of universities, and the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). The objectives of these conferences were to write job description, methods of training and teaching for general practitioners and principles of practice of primary health care.

1979: Formulation of high committee for General Practice and invitation of two GP consultants from United Kingdom. Travel of task force from MOHP and SCU to United Kingdom to take an idea about the practice of general practitioners. **The justification for the introduction of Family Practice/ Teaching was determined.** These justifications included fragmentation of services, lack of a personal relationship with the treating physician, the need to consult several physicians for common problems. Also, insufficient coordination of care and inadequate access to care especially in rural areas were strong justifications.

1979: The Suez Canal University (SCU) approved its first curriculum in master degree in General Practice in 1979 and accepted its first batch of MSc scholars in 1979/1980, who graduated 1980/1981. **Academic undergraduate Family Medicine (FM) teaching is implemented in Suez Canal University which is applying a special community based education all through medical year's education**

In 1994-1995: The Supreme Council of Universities recommended that each university should have a training program for General Practice/ Family Medicine. The duration of this program was three years and now it is five years.

In 1997: Establishment of family medicine specialty for post graduate teaching in Faculty of Medicine- **Menoufia University and Cairo University.** Now the majority of

Egyptian universities have a family medicine training program for post graduate teaching.

In ٢٠٠٤: The supreme council of universities in Egypt represented by the medical sector committee has urged the medical faculties to start applying principles of general practice in its curricula and to recognize the family medicine specialty. An official initiative was issued by the supreme council of universities in ٢٠٠٤ asking the faculties of medicine to start establishing the family medicine departments and to develop its curricula primarily for undergraduate teaching.

In ٢٠٠٧: Development and application of **Family Medicine Undergraduate Curriculum in Menoufia University**. Many of the medical schools followed the steps of the SCU, Menoufia and Cairo universities and established their own FM departments as currently six family medicine departments well-established inside the Egyptian universities:

١. Faculty of Medicine Suez Canal University
٢. Faculty of Medicine Menoufia University.
٣. Faculty of Medicine Cairo University
٤. Faculty of Medicine Zagazig University (٢٠١٣)
٥. Faculty of Medicine Ein Shams University (٢٠١٤)
٦. Helwan University also has just started its family medicine department.

Many other universities have a residency training program in Family Medicine but it is applied by community medicine departments e.g. Alexandria, Tanta and Al-Mansoura universities.

Beside the above mentioned training programs in the Egyptian universities, **the Egyptian Fellowship Program for Family Medicine is one of the bright examples for collaboration between the MOHP and the academic medical schools in Egypt.** The Egyptian Fellowship program is concerned by enrollment of family physicians who are recruited in MOHP and willing to receive certified training in Family Medicine. The evaluation process is very meticulous and included the following:-

- Portfolio/Logbook
- Structured feedback reports
- Cumulative sum Examination
- Direct observation using checklist/rating scale

II-CHALLENGES FACED BY THE DEPARTMENTS IN DEVELOPING THE SPECIALTY:

- Failure to understand the need to integrate clinical and community health skills and services
- As medical schools move away from traditional to pedagogical models of adult education.
- Students are encouraged to become more self-directed and active in their learning activities.
- Faculty members are expected to become “facilitators” of this learning and reserve didactic teaching methods for appropriate settings.

- Family medicine faculty could have an opportunity to meet medical students early in their training in order to share our perspective and serve as role models and mentors.
- The inclusion of a core clerkship in Family Medicine at all medical schools will mark a significant change in the role of Family Medicine staff in the medical school as a key provider of training in the clerkship years.
- Development of a national vision for a core clerkship in Family Medicine with universal goals and objectives.

Table (١): Average FM post graduate Candidates in Egyptian Universities until now.

	Diploma	MSc	MD
Suez Canal University	١٨٠	٨٠	٣٠
Menoufia University	١٦٠	٢٨٠	١٤
Cairo University	-----	٢٣٩	٣٠
Zagazig University	-----	٤١	-----
Ein Shams University	-----	-----	-----

III- CHALLENGES FACED BY GRADUATED FAMILY PHYSICIANS FROM THESE DEPARTMENTS:

- No proper career path.
- Non rewarding salaries and incentive bonuses.
- Lack of paid educational leaf
- Work with the private sector

IV- RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Availability of a well-trained generalist clinician among the leaders of medical education.
- Medical educators and health planner must understand the importance of an integrated plan for PHC training and delivery.
- Coordinated efforts should be made to share knowledge gained from the establishment of FP programs in other countries.
- Obtain political and financial support for universal access to PHC.

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