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Dcar Guy:

Enclosed is the latest annual report and bulletin for the School of Public Health. We function as an independent school with individual departments. However, in the University framework our school also serves as the Department of Preventive Medicine for the Medical School. This formality, meant to encourage collaboration, has had very little effect. There are a number of collaborative research studies but no really effective working and teaching relationships between the Medical School and the School of Public Health. We gave up a number of years ago trying to break into the rigid Medical School curriculum and there is very little formal training in epidemiology, public health or biostatistics for medical students. (They nevertheless manage to teach themselves enough to pass the national boards!)

In our actual experience, the ability to conserve our space, and our energies, from fights with the powerful clinical chiefs of the Medical School is very much facilitated by a separate School of Public Health. Departments of Preventive Medicine within Schools of Medicine usually, in our experience, are weak and inferior academic links. On the other hand, it would be marvelous to build into the regular medical curriculum of specialty areas, sections on prediction, prognosis and prevention, rather than having these areas segregated for specific lectures by public health experts!

Clearly epidemiology and biostatistics, as the third major research methodology in science, should be firmly built into medical school curriculum. They should be supported by medical leaders as an essential part of the broad understanding of disease, as well as for their practical contributions to teaching students to think critically, to read and interpret the literature appropriately and to design their researches well. Thus, under ideal circumstances, it would be great to be integrated within the Medical School as a strong department. In practice, however, most Schools of Public Health and Departments of Epidemiology are more comfortable as productive, separate institutions. In neither model in this country is the collaboration optimal.

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, MD
Professor and Director