

# Students in understaffed field

Primary care medicine is an understaffed field, but the College of Medicine at Texas A&M is preparing its students to enter the field and fill this need, said acting Dean Dr. Elvin Smith recently.

The medical school is holding classes for the first time this fall. "Our goal at the college is to produce at the end of four years a highly trained and qualified undifferentiated physician," Smith said. "We want to try to help correct the maldistribution and specialty choice problems of physicians."

Smith said many medical specialties are overcrowded, so the A&M curriculum exposes students to primary care fields. These include family practice, pediatrics, general internal medicine and obstetrics-gynecology. More doctors are needed in these fields.

The curriculum allows them to specialize in any direction they want, but we hope to persuade them to consider family practice or another primary care area," Smith said.

Through all four years of medical school, the A&M students are involved with physicians in private and small group practices in rural areas, he said. One afternoon each week during their second year, the students visit and learn in offices of general practitioners within a 40-mile radius of College Station.

"In the fourth year they spend four weeks in selected primary care physicians' offices all over Texas," said Smith. "This gives them first hand experience from their entrance to medical school to the time of making career decisions."

The students at the college were selected in part for their high probability of going into non-urban, primary care medicine, he added.

All of the 32 members of this fall's freshman class attended A&M at College Station, with the exception of one student from Tarleton State University. Only two of the students completed four years of college; 16 finished three years and 14 finished only two years.

"We're very selective with our

two-year students—we want mature students, only the very best," Smith said.

"We have the exact same prerequisites as other medical schools, with the exception of total semester and credit hours," he continued. "For a student to finish the A&M prerequisites well enough to be admitted to the school, they must be bright and highly motivated."

Admitting students after two years of college is an attempt to shorten the time spent on a medical education, Smith said.

"Some people think eight years represents too long a time to educate a physician," he said. That's only to get the M.D. There's still an extra three years for residency.

"Some medical schools try to cut down on medical education, but A&M feels the bulk of medical knowledge prohibits students from doing that. We attempt to shorten the preparatory time in college instead," Smith said.

Students spend almost eight hours a day, five days a week at the school, Smith said. The laboratories are open at night and the students are expected to use them then, Smith said.

The students have found the pace to be hectic, John Hodges, freshman class president, said.

"Everyone's been able to adjust so far," Hodges said. "There's a lot of material, but we realize that we've got to retain this information. It's not like being an undergrad, when you can say, 'I'll just cram for this test tonight and then I can forget it.'"

Hodges said freshmen are a bit uneasy, but not worried, about being the first class at a new medical school.

"People frown on new medical schools," Hodges said. "Some Texas Tech students, for instance, are having some trouble finding residencies. But we'll be doing our residencies at Scott and White Memorial Hospital in Temple, and that's one

of the most cherished residencies in Texas."

Most of the students feel lucky to be at A&M's school, Hodges said, especially because they are the first class.

"I feel lucky to have come along at the right time to get into med school here," he said. "I turned down other schools. Here I'm getting extra training. And all the professors are putting forth extra effort because they've waited so long to teach."

Most of the 32 full-time faculty arrived on the campus in the spring and summer of 1975, Smith said. There are also 66 off-campus clinical instructors.

The lecture rooms, laboratories and offices of the medical school are located in the Teague Research Center, Doherty Building and Student Health Center. A student center and 30 student housing units were just completed at the campus in Temple, Texas, where students will spend their fourth year.

A&M's medical school is likely to be one of the only in the nation to get started because of a nationwide feeling that the present number of medical schools is not sufficient to provide the doctors needed, Smith said.

The College of Medicine is due for full accreditation in 1981 by the American Medical Association and the Association of American Medical Colleges Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The school now has provisional accreditation. Smith said he has no fears that A&M will not get full accreditation.

"They don't grant provisional accreditation unless they know a school is good," he said. "In fact, A&M will be checked after the first class completes two years. Normally, medical schools are checked every year. The committee was very impressed with the quality of the curriculum, the faculty and the facilities here."

The medical school was formed in association with the Veterans Ad-

ministration, Scott and White Memorial Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine. However, Smith stressed that A&M's connection with Baylor is one of cooperation only.

"Medical students from A&M will get their degrees totally from A&M," he said.

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## Med students must pay back state cost

United Press International  
WORCESTER, Mass.—The University of Massachusetts Medical School, unlike any other medical school in the nation, will begin requiring all graduates to pay back or work off what it costs the state for their education.

Trustees will consider on Dec. 7 how much money must be repaid or what length of service will be required. Unlike other repayment programs, the rule applies to everyone, not just scholarship students.

The Legislature included the requirement in the college's 1978 budget. Carol Cohen, public information officer for the medical school, said the school was not consulted. The rule becomes effective with members of the September 1978 freshman class after they complete their internship and residency.

"But the Legislature didn't say how much money, and they didn't say how long the students would have to work," Cohen said.

Sen. James Kelly, D-Oxford, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee that inserted the stipulation, said it was his idea. "The cost of education is so high, and the people who graduate make so much money that we should get back some of it," Kelly said.

A study conducted for the Legislature when it was considering the plan said opponents find the repayment plans discriminate against poor students who will have to work it off, and also might force students into higher paying specialties to meet the payments.

Tuition at UMass Medical School is \$840 per year and will increase to \$900 in September.

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