

**Title:** A new opportunity for Egyptian health professions educators

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**Context and Setting:** In Egypt, health professions education (HPE) is practiced by health professionals who have no formal training in education. Faculty members are the cornerstone of the educational process. To enhance HPE, the Egyptian National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency and the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization (EMRO-WHO) recommended an urgent plan to train HPE Faculty in medical education.

**Why the idea/change was necessary:** In order to access training in medical education, the available options were to leave one's employment for expensive on-site educational programs offered either regionally or abroad. To make an impact on HPE in Egypt, it was critical to develop more affordable opportunities for educating larger numbers of faculty in HPE in Egypt.

**What was done?** The newly established Medical Education Department in the Faculty of Medicine, Suez Canal University, Egypt, developed a distance learning Diploma in HPE that covers all the medical education domains. This program is sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and targets a wide range of faculty in all HPE institutions in Egypt including faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, and Speech Therapy. Faculty recruited to teach in this Diploma program are qualified and have deep experience in medical education. Twenty, including three from other institutions in Egypt, have Master degrees in Medical Education from a number of internationally recognized medical schools. The Diploma is composed of seven modules, each taught in six weeks. Topics include curriculum development, students' assessment, teaching/learning skills, program evaluation, and quality assurance in HPE. This program also addresses and encourages inter-professional learning. The program is run through a dedicated website that included a blackboard. The Diploma Program was announced through newspaper ads, mass e-mails, flyers and brochures. This resulted in a rush of applications from a number of medical, dental, pharmacy, and nursing schools in Egypt. Thirty Eight candidates from 15 different institutions were selected for the first batch, while other applications were postponed to the subsequent years.

**Evaluation of the results or impact:** After planning of the seven modules was complete, a number of national, regional, and international experts in medical education validated the Diploma curriculum. The Medical Sector of the Supreme Council of Universities has endorsed the Diploma course and recognized its certificate as the only formal course in medical education in Egypt that is taught through distance learning. The 5-year goal of the program is to train 5% of the faculty in HPE across the country. The Diploma curriculum is designed to ensure that the alumni of this program will educate other educators in their institutions and make a real impact on health professions education in Egypt.