



Miller School Leads Nation in Medical Schools Granting Dual Degrees

Additional degrees help build careers and prepare students for leadership roles

Many doctors with dual advanced degrees – such as an M.D./Ph.D. or M.D./M.B.A. combination – spend five, six or even more years to earn both degrees. In contrast, an innovative approach at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine provides the opportunity for medical students to graduate with dual degrees in just four years.





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The UM dual-degree program has been so successful that about 60 of the 200 medical school graduates each year leave armed with two degrees. This feat places UM in the No. 1 spot in the nation for producing physicians who also have degrees in public health, business, genomics and soon, international administration, humanities, and integrative well-being.

"I am proud of the quality of medical education at the Miller School that enables our students to pursue additional degrees in their areas of interest. It aligns well with our stated goal of producing transformative leaders in health care. The skills and training from the dual degrees add to their abilities to impact meaningful change in the future of health care, said Latha Chandran, M.D. M.P.H., executive dean and founding chair of the Department of Medical Education at the Miller School.

"These four-year options really give students a different type of training and skill set that will not only help them in applying for residencies, but also throughout their career," said Gauri Agarwal, M.D., associate professor and associate dean for curriculum at the Miller School.

Better scientists, leaders and clinicians

The combined M.D./M.P.H. program, which started in 2011, is now the most popular dual-degree program at University of Miami. Students learn how to care for an individual and how to take the bigger picture into account, which can make them better scientists, leaders and clinicians, Dr. Agarwal said.



For example, “if I understand the social determinants of health fully – such as housing, transportation or systemic racism – and other factors that may be affecting their access to care, then I can provide a different type of care to that individual.”

Michael Maguire, M.D., M.P.H., graduated with the first class to earn this dual degree at the Miller School in 2015.

“For me it was a way to get both a Master of Public Health degree and an M.D. degree in four years, which is unique as a compressed program,” he said. “I’ve always felt that improved both sides of my education.

“Having a degree within my medical training with a public health flavor really changed the fabric of how I practice as a physician, added Dr. Maguire, who is now an academic hospitalist board certified in internal medicine and pediatrics at Christiana Care in Newark, Delaware.

Other Miller School dual-degree options include an M.D./M.B.A.; M.D. with a Master of Genomics; and an M.D. with a Master of International Administration developed in conjunction with the College of Arts and Sciences. Starting soon, students will be able to apply for an M.D. with a Master of Integrative Wellbeing, a program that focuses on promoting health and wellbeing. A Master of Humanities and Bioethics program is also being developed.

Medical school education on its own can be rigorous, so how do students handle getting two degrees at once?

“That was one of my big concerns when the M.D./M.P.H. program began,” Dr. Agarwal said. “In the admissions process, we are



very transparent about students having to be skilled with time management.”

“There were times it was challenging,” Dr. Maguire said. “It wasn’t easy.”

On the plus side, the dual-degree programs not only save students time, but also tuition – they pay less than they would for two degrees separately. In addition, the dual degrees “really set students apart when they apply for residencies and during interviews with program directors and other faculty,” Dr. Agarwal said. “It clearly gives them a skill set that separates them from other applicants.”

The programs pay off

Early data suggest the dual-degree program is paying off. Dr. Agarwal and colleagues are surveying physicians who graduated with an M.D./M.P.H. about their careers.

“It’s really extraordinary,” she said. “Many have national or state leadership positions, and almost half are chief residents in their programs, so we’re seeing evidence of significant leadership skills. Our plan is to keep following them.”

“UM really does a nice job of making sure public health education is part of the medical curriculum. A lot of people have both degrees, but their education is not necessarily as interwoven as it is at UM,” said Dr. Maguire, who is also on the faculty at Jefferson Medical College and the University of Delaware School of Public Health.

None of the success of the dual-degree programs would be possible without strong support from the University. “It



starts from the top. President Frenk, Provost Duerk, and Dean Ford have been very supportive of interdisciplinary collaboration,” Dr. Agarwal said. “They want the medical school, the business school, the College of Arts and Sciences, and all of us to work together for our students.”

The half-hour drive between the UM medical campus and Coral Gables campus “sometimes feels like 500 miles, but it’s really not that far,” Dr. Agarwal said. “We can do a lot of really innovative things together.”

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