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JAMA Commentary Outlines Policy Recommendations for Universities Seeking to Advance Global Public Health

Article authored by UAEM members builds upon Philadelphia Consensus Statement

BOSTON, Ma. – This week, The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published an article authored by members of Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) outlining policy changes universities must adopt in order to advance global health.

The article, entitled “Leveraging University Research to Advance Global Health,” authored by Dave Chokshi and Dr. Rahul Rajkumar expands upon the groundbreaking principles laid out in the Philadelphia Consensus Statement (PCS) by UAEM in November 2006. These principles include promoting equal access to the fruits of university research, adopting strategies aimed at increasing research and development for neglected diseases, and measuring research success by its impact on human welfare rather than royalties earned. Thousands of students, faculty, and supporters at over a hundred campuses around the world have signed the Philadelphia Consensus Statement since it was originally launched.

The publication of the article in JAMA is an important recognition of the ability of universities to improve global health and that doctors and scientists at universities must engage in the discussion over what happens to their research when it leaves the laboratory.

“Universities have a critical role to play as key innovators in the field of biomedical research,” said Chokshi, a medical student at the University of Pennsylvania. “Unfortunately, their current policies have a real human cost. Universities must move beyond rhetoric to action.”

Following on the momentum created by the PCS, in March, eleven research universities led by Stanford adopted a white paper on best licensing practices that recognized universities’ fundamental responsibility to ensure their research benefits the world’s poor. The article published in the current edition of JAMA will help to guide the conversation as these universities consider concrete plans to move forward.

About Universities Allied for Essential Medicines

UAEM is a coalition of over 40 student chapters across the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom dedicated to using university action to ameliorate the access-to-medicines crisis in developing countries. Its two-fold mission is to: (1) determine how universities can help ensure that biomedical end products, such as drugs, are made more accessible in developing countries and (2) increase the amount of research conducted on neglected diseases, or those diseases predominantly affecting people who are too poor to constitute a market attractive to private-sector R&D investment. Please see <http://www.essentialmedicine.org/> for more information.

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