Since 2004, the Island Medical Program has seen 160 medical physicians graduate through a program that originated as part of a unique provincial plan to increase the number of new doctors in British Columbia and encourage them to establish their practices in under-served areas of the province. Doctor Oscar Casiro, Regional Associate Dean for Vancouver Island Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia, says students learn more in smaller learning environments. “Students don’t get lost in the shuffle; it’s like a family, and that’s the advantage of a smaller community,” Dr. Casiro said. “They seem to find work quicker because the rural areas are under-served.”

The Island Medical Program (IMP), based at the University of Victoria, is one of four distinct geographical sites of the distributed UBC MD Undergraduate Program, the others being the Northern Medical Program at UNBC, the Southern Medical Program at UBC-Okanagan, and the Vancouver Fraser Medical Program at UBC-Vancouver. The distributed UBC MD Program was the first of its kind in North America and has become a model for similar efforts elsewhere.

Since its inception, IMP has recruited 600 teaching faculty who help out with the program. The IMP students are based in the Medical Sciences Building at University of Victoria. Students at all three sites (IMP, NMP, and VFMP) follow an identical curriculum and are linked through sophisticated audiovisual and e-learning technology for simultaneous, interactive learning. All students in the IMP are registered with the UBC Faculty of Medicine and will receive UBC degrees. While at University of Victoria, students in the IMP have affiliate status, granting them access to all services provided to any University of Victoria student.

All applications for the IMP are processed through the UBC MD Undergraduate Program Admissions office. Currently, thirty-two students are accepted into the IMP annually. IMP students spend the first four months of their undergraduate medical program at UBC in Vancouver and then move to Victoria to complete their degree requirements. During the more clinical third and fourth years of the program, students

The UBC Faculty of Medicine would like to congratulate the 11 Aboriginal graduates from the M.D. program, 2013!

Very best wishes for your future as health care professionals!

Are you interested in applying to UBC’s Faculty of Medicine?

The UBC Faculty of Medicine welcomes applications from qualified Aboriginal applicants. The Aboriginal admission process of the Faculty has a target of 5% of the annual complement of funded seats in the first year M.D. Undergraduate Program. Aboriginal applicants can apply either to the regular stream of admission or to the Aboriginal admission stream. Applicants who self-identify as Aboriginal will be considered under the Aboriginal admission process as well as under the regular admission process.

For more information, please contact:
James Andrew, Aboriginal Student Initiatives Coordinator at 604.875.8298 (ext 68946) or aboriginal.md@ubc.ca or visit http://mdprogram.med.ubc.ca/admissions/
have the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time in hospital and community-based clinical settings within the Vancouver Island Health Authority. After successfully completing the four-year MD undergraduate program, graduates enter residency training across Canada and beyond in one of over 50 specialty areas. Post-graduate training ranges from two to six years.

As part of the 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2012, University of Victoria has selected 50 great moments in its history to receive special recognition. The arrival of the first medical students at the Island Medical Program in 2005 was chosen as one of these great moments and has been featured on the University of Vic website, in the Times Colonist newspaper, and most recently in a special 50th Anniversary edition of the University of Victoria Annual Review.

Almost half of IMP graduates have gone on to complete residency programs in Family Medicine, and the rest are in highly competitive specialty training programs. As graduates complete their residency training and begin work as full-fledged physicians, some have started to practice medicine in Vancouver Island communities including Victoria, Nanaimo, Comox, and Campbell River.

Geoff McKee, Class of 2013, says he sincerely hopes that he will have the opportunity to provide services for under-served communities in BC, whether rural or urban. “In particular, I hope to devote part of my practice to working with Aboriginal communities, whether it is within the community where I build my practice or travelling to remote communities for outreach clinics.”

With First Nation people in Canada having high rates of diabetes, McKee hopes to focus his medical career to help combat it. “As a family physician, I intend to provide diabetes care and further explore the underlying issues related to the epidemic of diabetes among Aboriginal communities,” McKee says. “I believe that there are many factors contributing to the increasing burden of diabetes and would love to collaborate with communities on new prevention and management strategies.”

Frank Clarke, Class of 2013, says that there is no question that the disproportionate rate of diabetes in First Nation Peoples’ as compared to the general population is of great concern to him and many of his colleagues. “In fact, regardless of which specialty one chooses, it is likely that many will have to address diabetes in First Nation Peoples, whether trying to educate to help prevent or delay its onset, or managing those already diagnosed, or dealing with many of its consequences on various organ systems. From my perspective, the high rates cannot be ignored.”

Clarke also touched on the program’s vision for physicians establishing their practices in under-served areas of the province. “I am not too familiar with the specifics of the plans to increase the number of new physicians in BC and increase physicians in under-served areas, or how well they have/are working. However, from my perspective, it is something that is discussed while doing rural Family Medicine rotations with family doctors during the last year of medical school and as well with some of my classmates more recently. As I already have three children, any incentives to work in under-served communities will matter for me in terms of where I set up a practice. The Provincial plan/incentives will have more relevance once we are closer to completing our residency training.”

Many medical students will choose to stay in Canada to establish their careers, but others choose to go abroad. Doctor Casiro says there is no obligation in the program to practice in rural areas; it’s a matter of encouraging the students to study and train in communities who are under-served. “In my opinion the physicians tend to learn and work more in smaller, rural communities; it’s a matter of encouraging the students to study and train in communities who are under-served. “In my opinion the physicians tend to learn and work more in smaller, rural communities; it’s a matter of encouraging the students to study and train in communities who are under-served. “In my opinion the physicians tend to learn and work more in smaller, rural communities; it’s a matter of encouraging the students to study and train in communities who are under-served.”

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