

**TITLE:**

Empathy and Well-being in the Making – A Cross-National Longitudinal Mixed Methods Case Study of Family Medicine Educational Interventions in Undergraduate Medical Education

**RESEARCH TEAM: CANADA**

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**PROBLEM & RATIONALE:**

Physician empathy is a critical dimension of healthcare delivery, associated with multiple beneficial outcomes for patients, physicians, and the broader healthcare system. Despite its recognized importance, a substantial body of research has for long time documented a concerning decline in empathy over the course of undergraduate medical education, particularly during clinical training. However, this traditional narrative of a steady decline has recently been challenged: while some studies continue to report decreases in empathy, emerging evidence points to more complex and heterogeneous trajectories, with empathy declining in certain contexts, remaining stable, or even increasing in others.

Our research team seeks to contribute clarifying these divergent findings, by examining the potential instrumental influence of family physicians' preceptorship in community-based settings on medical students' empathy and well-being during undergraduate training. Adopting transformative learning as theoretical perspective, we will conduct a longitudinal, comparative, mixed-methods case study involving two distinct educational interventions implemented in undergraduate medical programs at universities in two different countries. The findings of this investigation will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of empathy development in medical education, notably by identifying the conditions under which empathy is eroded, sustained, or transformed. At a practical level, they will inform the design of educational practices and clinical learning environments that support both empathy engagement and student well-being, thereby advancing more humanistic and sustainable models of medical training.



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