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Letters

Informing prospective medical students

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[◀ Previous](#) | [Next ▶](#)

- [Contents list for this issue](#)
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TO THE EDITOR: Applying for medical school in Australia is not an easy process. Prospective applicants must choose from 19 medical schools and multiple course options, navigate admissions processes and tests, and develop some understanding of the pathway towards full registration and vocational training.

Despite this complexity, there is a paucity of information that provides a bird's eye view of the Australian medical school admissions process. There is no single source of information that comprehensively maps the options available to those wishing to embark on a career in medicine. Existing references are often outdated¹ or do not accurately identify all medical courses.²

To fill this information gap, the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) launched its inaugural Medical School Guide in 2007. The guide paves the way for informing prospective medical students about the challenges of studying medicine and the diversity of medical courses on offer in Australia.

The guide contains two sections: "Essential Information" includes details about the categories of entry, admissions tests, support schemes and vocational training pathways; and "The Medical Schools" contains information about individual universities, including location, entry requirements and procedures, and contact details.

AMSA produced the guide in conjunction with Medical Deans Australia New Zealand (MDANZ) and the Australian Medical Association. Information on individual courses was supplied by the universities, via MDANZ, to ensure accuracy. All but one medical school submitted enrolment information for publishing.

The Medical School Guide was launched on the AMSA website (at <http://www.amsa.org.au/medschoolguide.pdf>), and promotional letters were sent to relevant stakeholder groups. In the 110 days immediately after its release, there were 37 555 hits on the webpage, with more than 3500 downloads of the guide.

In 2008, AMSA hopes to attract the financial and in-kind support required to publish and distribute a hardcopy version of the Medical School Guide. AMSA also hopes to further develop the guide to include information for prospective international students about visa requirements and opportunities to enter the Australian health workforce.

In a dynamic environment where numbers of medical students and schools are on the rise, there is a convincing case for a comprehensive, user-friendly guide to medical school admissions. The AMSA Medical School Guide aims to do this, and its effectiveness will require rigorous evaluation in years to come.

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2. Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Course finder [website]. <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/CourseFinderSearch.htm> (accessed Dec 2007).

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