



Exploring 40 years of Korean medical education conference themes

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Purpose: The Korean Society of Medical Education (KSME) was founded in 1983 and celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023. This study examines the evolution of topics discussed at KSME conferences from 1971 through 2023, highlighting shifts in the focus of medical education.

Methods: We analyzed 90 KSME conferences over 5 decades (1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s), categorizing the topics into three eras based on emerging themes and continuity.

Results: Consequently, 37 topics covered at the conference were categorized. Ten topics continuously appeared from the 1970s to the 2010s, including future directions of medical education, teaching methods, faculty development, and curriculum. The topics from the 1970s to the 1990s included 14 areas, such as medical education evaluation, non-undergraduate curriculum, community-related, and research. Thirteen new topics emerged after the 2000s, such as social accountability, student support, professionalism, and quality improvements. The most common topics under innovations in medical education, a case of curriculum innovation at universities that began after 2000, were clinical clerkship, curriculum development, and medical humanities.

Conclusion: KSME's selection of conference topics has been strategically aligned with societal needs and the evolving landscape of medical education. Future topics should continue to address relevant societal and educational challenges.

Key Words: Congress, Chronology, Education, Medical education, Societies

Introduction

The Korean Society of Medical Education (KSME) was founded in May 1983 and celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023. The origins of KSME date back to the early 1960s when medical school deans convened the Association of Deans of Medical College's Meeting to exchange opinions on medical education. The Medical School Dean's Council

progressively disbanded in May 1971 due to the need for a more structured organization. In response, 14 medical schools established the "Korean Association of Medical Education," renamed the "Korean Council on Medical Education" in 1981. Recognizing the need for a dedicated body to enhance professional academic activities, KSME was launched in 1983. The following year, the Korean League of Deans of Medical Colleges was formed to continue collaborative efforts among medical school deans [1].

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KSME was established to advance medical education and scholarships beyond operating medical education courses at a practical level. This goal continues today, as evidenced by the organization's goal, which is "to undertake systematic and scholarly research on the system, goals, methodologies, evaluation, and all relevant aspects of medical education," as stated on the KSME's website [2]. For this purpose, the KSME has conducted various activities, such as holding academic conferences, publishing scholarly journals, operating multiple workshops, and cooperating with related organizations.

Among the different scholarly activities, conferences are pivotal in extending knowledge across disciplines and countries [3]. They provide a dynamic platform for education professionals to share research, discuss issues, and network. Despite some criticisms, conferences facilitate collaboration between academia and industry [4]. They draw attention to urgent topics in medical education, reflecting the shifting demands of healthcare and society. Studying the history of the Korean Medical Education Conference provides insights into the evolution of medical education in Korea and the adaptive strategies of KSME.

Over the past 5 decades, the Korean medical education community has seen diverse academic exchanges, with changes in conference locations, frequencies, and topics reflecting shifts in host organizations and societal needs. This study aims to systematically review the historical evolution of conference themes over the last 40 years, focusing on the topics presented at the Korean medical education conference and innovative case studies from medical schools.

Methods

1. Research method

A literature review was conducted targeting the 40-year history of the KSME, including materials from KSME's archives and website.

2. Data collection

Data collection involved gathering annual academic conference proceedings files maintained by the KSME. For years with missing records, additional materials were obtained from professors who served on the Korean Association of Medical Education board. The data collection period extended from 1971 to 2023. This study also included academic conferences hosted by the Korean Association of Medical Education, the predecessor of the KSME, from 1971 to 1983. During the period spanning from 1971 to 1989, the academic conferences were referred to as the "Medical Education Seminar" instead of the "Korean Medical Education Conference (KMEC)." This earlier form, considered a precursor to the present-day academic conference, served as the focal point of investigation in this study.

3. The subject of analysis

The scope of this study was defined by the thematic focus of academic conferences and the titles of presentations on innovations in medical education (IME). When conference topics were broad, such as "medical education," specific content from relevant conference programs was chosen as representative titles. The inclusion of IME in our analysis stemmed from our assessment that IME, featuring presentations on innovative medical education practices, effectively mirrors evolving trends in the field.

4. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The theme of the academic conference was analyzed by extracting keywords from the subject (or title). However, comprehensive terms, such as “medical school” or “medical education,” were excluded. For example, “professionalism” was extracted from “professionalism in medical education.” The extracted keywords were classified and categorized based on repeated discussions and consensus among authors. Additionally, we analyzed the topics selected at the conference according to the five periods. Critical keywords were also extracted from the presentation titles from IME sessions.

Results

1. Changes in the theme of academic conferences

Table 1 shows the results of the analysis of the topics of medical education conferences based on key terms that appeared in the titles of conferences held 90 times between 1971 and 2023. The topics addressed at the conference can be classified into 37 categories. Among these, 10 topics appeared continuously from the 1970s to the 2010s and 14 appeared from the 1970s to the 1990s. Thirteen new topics surfaced in the 2000s. Of the 10 topics discussed

Table 1. Changes in Academic Conference Topics

Topic classification	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	The 2010s and later
Topics that appeared both before and after the 2000s					
Future direction of medical education ^{a)}	●	●	●	●	●
Teaching methods	●	●	●	●	
Faculty development	●		●	●	●
Curriculum	●		●	●	●
Educational system	●		●		●
Post-graduation medical education	●			●	
Student assessment		●	●	●	
Clinical education		●	●	●	
Integrated curriculum		●	●	●	
Clinical clerkship		●		●	●
Topics that only appeared from the 1970s to the 1990s					
Korean National Licensing Examination for Physicians	●	●	●		
Department of pre-medicine	●		●		
Character education	●		●		
Statistics	●				
Primary care	●				
Community	●				
Health needs	●				
Family planning	●				
Pediatrics	●				
Related organizations ^{b)}		●	●		
Accreditation			●		
Graduate education			●		
Oriental medicine education			●		
Medical education research			●		

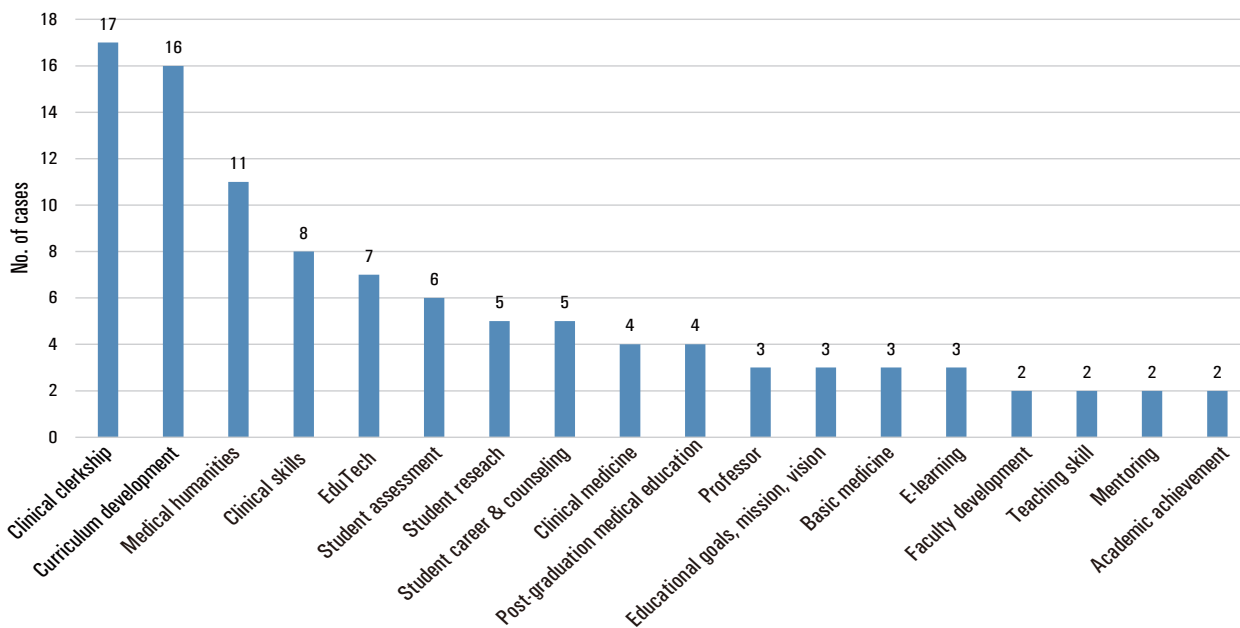
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Table 1. (Continued)

Topic classification	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	The 2010s and later
Topics that only appeared after the 2000s					
Social accountability				●	●
Student support				●	●
Professionalism				●	
Quality improvement				●	
Leadership				●	
Communication education				●	
Admission & student selection				●	
Creativeness					●
Medical humanities					●
Educational environment					●
Patient as partner					●
Artificial intelligence					●

^{a)}The relevant topics are as follows: setting the direction of Korean medical education, medical education for the 2000s, medical school education in the 21st century, medical care in the IMF (International Monetary Fund) era, medical education and research, desirable 21st-century medical education, medical education past, present, future, reflection on Korean medical education and the way forward, tasks and future of doctor training, and medical education in the era of the pandemic. ^{b)}The relevant topics were as follows: the performance and prospects of the Medical Education Council, the career path of the Korean Council of Deans of Medical Colleges, and the status report and discussion of the activities of the Korean Medical School Accreditation and Evaluation Committee.

Fig. 1. Frequency of Topic Areas Presented in Innovations in Medical Education Sessions



both before and after the 2000s, the future direction of medical education was covered in all five phases. Teaching methods, faculty development, and curriculum were consistently addressed in all four phases. The Korean Medical Licensing Examination (KMLE) was a central theme only until the 1990s, whereas social accountability

and student support started to surface in the 2000s and continued into the 2010s.

2. Changes in the topics of IME

IME, a session to present cases of curriculum innovation by universities, began in the 2000s. After the 2010s, more

IMEs were announced, with 91 being announced by 2023. Fig. 1 shows the scope of the IME topic presentation. At IME, clinical clerkship emerged as the topic most frequently discussed, with curriculum development and medical humanities coming in next.

Discussion

The study elucidated a discernible shift in the thematic landscape of academic conferences organized by the KSME, in response to the evolving exigencies of societal demands vis-à-vis medical education.

Throughout its historical trajectory, the KSME has consistently enriched discourse surrounding the future trajectory of medical education, maintain a steadfast emphasis on core themes such as curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, faculty development, and clinical education. Since the onset of the 2000s, emergent thematic currents, notably pertaining to social responsibility and ethical professionalism, have prominently emerged, delineating the evolving interface between medical practitioners and societal imperatives. Moreover, the inclusion of subjects like quality improvement and leadership strategies reflects an earnest engagement with broader institutional and professional challenges. Concurrently, the incorporation of topics such as student support and selection criteria underscores a widening aperture towards student-centric pedagogical paradigms. Additionally, the integration of domains like creativity and artificial intelligence within KSME's discourse underscores a proactive stance towards aligning with societal transformations beyond the traditional purview of medical education. The topics discussed involved essential issues addressed in medical schools at the time, issues that medical schools had to solve jointly, issues that required advanced preparation for future medical education, or

issues that society requested of medical schools. For example, Han et al. [5] delineated the evolving contours of medical education aimed at cultivating future physicians, encapsulating four pivotal trends: (1) a humanistic approach to patient safety, (2) early experience and longitudinal integration, (3) beyond hospitals toward society, and (4) student-driven learning with advanced technology. The topics covered in the conferences since the 2000s and the 2010s fit well with this trend.

The most frequently reported topics at IME included clinical clerkship, curriculum development and re-organization, medical humanities, and clinical skills education. The findings indicate a notable shift towards novel approaches in clinical practice and medical humanities curricula, necessitating heightened student engagement compared to traditional preclinical didactic lectures. The topics covered at IME share many similarities with the highly cited research topics in medical education [6], including clinical competency, professionalism, and medical simulation, as highlighted in previous academic conferences.

In evaluating the results of this study, KSME has identified the topics of current issues that medical schools need to address, the challenges they face, and the content required to prepare for future medical education. The society has developed various types of sessions and provided a platform for medical schools to share opinions and seek solutions. Therefore, it is crucial to determine the contents of the KMEC program as an urgent task that the 40 medical schools must collectively address and think about together. The conference should also include an advanced introduction to the content required by society and the times, and the topics that society and medical schools should address together. This underscores the importance of aligning conference content with the needs of medical schools, which can significantly impact the future of medical education.

While this study has offered valuable insights into the evolutionary trajectory of academic conferences, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that constrain its capacity to comprehensively grasp the multifaceted development of such conferences. Specifically, this study did not include an analysis of the development of conference hosting, operation methods, and session structures. These aspects should be addressed in future research. Furthermore, if research is periodically conducted to analyze academic conferences to evaluate and consider whether they select topics and operate according to the needs of the times and member medical schools, academic conferences can be conducted based on the results of this study. This will help redefine the direction of the competition, diversify the program sessions, and organize content that meets the needs of medical schools.

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