



A history of 20 years of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine

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The study aims to examine the 20-year developmental trajectory of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine (2004–2025). It analyzes educational support documents, self-evaluation reports, and Curriculum Committee meeting minutes to illuminate both the direction and significance of Ewha's medical education reforms. Key milestones include the formal establishment of the Medical Education Office in 2004 and the subsequent founding of the Department of Medical Education in 2005. Major innovations over this period encompass the expansion of objective structured clinical examinations and the introduction of problem-based learning modules. Additional advancements include the establishment of the Ewha Medical Simulation Center and Learning Resource Center, as well as the reversion to an undergraduate medical college format in 2015. The college has also prioritized faculty development workshops and medical education seminars, implemented the Ewha Social Active Communication program, and introduced team-based learning. Noteworthy initiatives include the enhancement of student research capacity and the launch of a dedicated medical education newsletter. In 2022, the Medical Education Office was reorganized as the Ewha Center for Medical Education, marking a new era of integrated leadership and expanded educational initiatives. Ewha has consistently achieved high accreditation statuses, reflecting ongoing excellence in curriculum development, assessment, and faculty development. This progress demonstrates the dedication and collaboration of both faculty and staff, resulting in a robust educational framework. The institution's continuous growth serves not only as a testament to past achievements but also as a foundation for future advancements in Ewha's medical education, with the ultimate aim of cultivating women leaders in Korean healthcare.

Keywords: Anniversaries and special events; Communication; Leadership; Medical education; Problem-based learning

Introduction

This paper systematically examines the developmental trajectory of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine. To achieve this, educational support documents generated over the past 2 decades were collected and analyzed, with special attention paid to temporal changes and major curricular themes. The primary data sources consisted of (1) the Ewha Medical Education Office's educational support archives (2004–2025) [1], (2) the College's self-evaluation reports [2], and (3) minutes of the Curriculum Committee meetings (2004–2025) [3].

Through this analysis, the study aims to illuminate both the direction and significance of Ewha's medical education reforms. By reflecting on the past and examining the present, these findings are expected to offer critical insights for designing the future of the College's educational initiatives. Although Ewha has pursued women's medical education since its founding in 1945 and achieved numerous milestones, this investigation focuses on the last 20 years. This period was selected because the establishment of the Medical Education Office (now the Ewha Center for Medical Education) and the Department of Medical Education during this time provided the institutional framework necessary for a coordinated, scholarly approach to "medical education" as a distinct field (Supplement 1).

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Current status of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine

Key figures in medical education at Ewha

The formal establishment of the Medical Education Office in 2004 marked the beginning of systematic organizational management. Professor Soon Nam Lee (Internal Medicine) was appointed as the first Director, with Professor Bok Kyu (Ivo) Kwon (Medical Humanities) serving as Deputy Director and Professor Jae Jin Han (Thoracic Surgery) contributing in a joint capacity. Professor Lee subsequently expanded her leadership by serving as Dean of the College of Medicine. In 2005, the creation of the Department of Medical Education laid the scholarly foundation for Ewha's medical education efforts.

Starting in 2007, Professor Jae-Jin Han took on the directorship, with Professor Bok-Kyu Kwon continuing as Deputy Director. During this time, the faculty base broadened through the involvement of BK21 Research Professors Jung Hee An, Eun Kyung Eo (Emergency Medicine), and Sun Young Hong (Internal Medicine), each serving as additional Deputy Directors.

In 2013, Professor Hee Jung Choi (Internal Medicine) became Director (then titled "Head"), supported by Deputy Directors

Professor Hye-Kyung Jung (Internal Medicine) and Professor Eun Kyung Eo. From 2014 onward, Professor Yeong Seon Hong led the office, with Professors Hye Kyung Jung and Han Soo Kim (Otorhinolaryngology) serving as Deputy Directors, further consolidating and deepening the program.

In 2018, Professor Do Sang Cho (Neurosurgery) assumed the directorship, with Deputy Directors Professor Claire Junga Kim (Medical Humanities) and Professor Hee Sung Lee (Surgery). The following year, Professor Bok-Kyu (Ivo) Kwon returned as Director, with Professors Claire Junga Kim and Hee Seong Lee continuing as Deputies.

In 2021, Professor Hyeon-Jong Yang (Parasitology) took on the role of Director, joined by Deputy Directors Professor Chung Hyun Tae (Internal Medicine) and Hee Seong Lee, thereby maintaining continuity in educational operations.

The Medical Education Office was expanded into the Ewha Center for Medical Education in 2022, with the Center Director also serving as Associate Dean for Education. Professor Wook Bum Pyun (Internal Medicine) became the first Center Director, assisted by Deputy Directors Chung Hyun Tae and Hee Seong Lee. Simultaneously, Professor So-Mi Jeong, an education specialist, joined the Center as a dedicated educational professional.

Since 2024, Professor Seung-Jung Kim (Internal Medicine) has

Evolution of medical education at Ewha

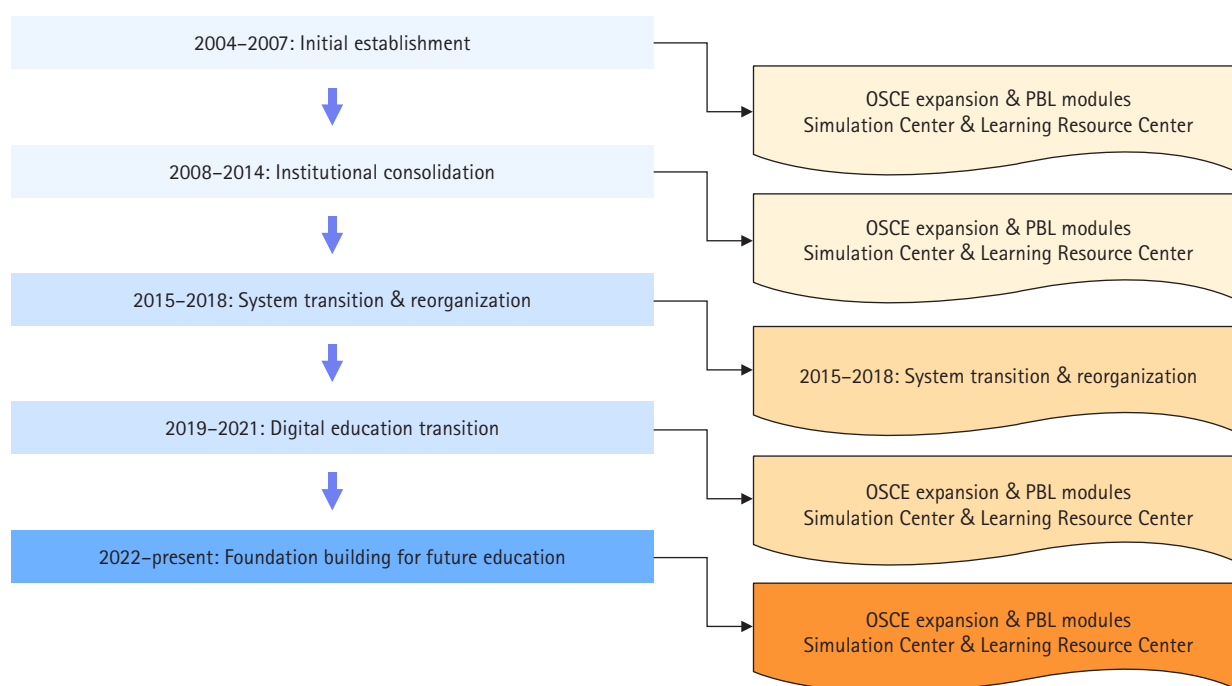


Fig. 1. Evolution of medical education in Ewha (2004–2025). OSCE, objective structured clinical examination; PBL, problem-based learning.

served as Center Director and Associate Dean for Education, with Professors Chung Hyun Tae and Min Gyeong Jeong as Deputy Directors.

This succession of leadership demonstrates the progressive institutionalization and intellectual maturation of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine.

Principal phases in the evolution of medical education at Ewha

The development of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine can be divided into 5 distinct phases: (1) initial establishment (2004–2007), (2) institutional consolidation (2008–2014), (3) system transition and reorganization (2015–2018), (4) digital education transition (2019–2021), and (5) foundation-building for future education (2022–present).

The salient changes and accomplishments of each phase are detailed below (Fig. 1).

Initial establishment (2004–2007)

This period marks the formal organization of Ewha's medical education framework. With the official launch of the Medical Education Office in 2004, a structured administrative system was established. Key innovations during this time included the expansion of the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) and the development of problem-based learning (PBL) modules. Leadership development camps, aimed at fostering female medical leaders, became an institutional tradition, and systematic curricular research was initiated in preparation for the shift to a graduate-entry medical college. The creation of the Department of Medical Education in 2005 provided a dedicated academic foundation for the field. In 2007, the opening of the Ewha Medical Simulation Center and the introduction of a Learning Resource Center (LRC) further strengthened the educational infrastructure.

Institutional consolidation (2008–2014)

During this stage, operational stability was achieved and the groundwork was laid for an eventual return to an undergraduate medical college structure. Systematic support for both student education and faculty development was established, and an outcomes-based assessment framework for graduation was put in place. Course syllabi were revised, and co-curricular programs such as Ewha Social Active Communication (ESAC) and the Standardized Patient Instructor initiative were introduced to enhance medical professionalism and social competencies. In the latter part of this phase, preparations began for developing a pre-medical track, setting the stage for future curriculum changes.

System transition and reorganization (2015–2018)

The introduction of the pre-medical program in 2015 marked Ewha's return from a graduate-entry system to a traditional medical college format. This transition prompted significant reforms in pedagogical methods, faculty involvement, and administrative operations. Comprehensive restructuring was undertaken across learning environments, assessment methodologies, and support systems. The new undergraduate curriculum was formally launched in 2017, symbolizing this pivotal change. A dedicated task force for curriculum reform was established, and important discussions began regarding the implementation of computer-based testing.

Digital education transition (2019–2021)

The relocation to the Magok campus spurred rapid expansion of digital infrastructure, including the introduction of a learning management system, an integrated portfolio platform, and centralized management of the Simulation Center. The global COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic further accelerated the adoption of online instruction and remote assessments, enhancing educational flexibility and sustainability. This period was characterized by a systematic response to the demands of digital transformation in medical education.

Foundation-building for future education (2022–present)

The expansion of the Medical Education Office into the Ewha Center for Medical Education in 2022 marked the beginning of a new era. The Center Director simultaneously serves as Associate Dean for Education, reflecting integrated leadership. Key initiatives include public disclosure of feedback and course evaluations, regular medical education seminars, the revitalization of a journal club, and the publication of an internal newsletter, all of which contribute to a robust educational culture. Ongoing long-term initiatives include refinement of an outcomes-based curriculum, phasing out PBL in favor of expanded team-based learning (TBL), operating a task force for a 6-year integrated curriculum, and implementing a comprehensive system for educational quality management.

Core themes in Ewha's medical-education enterprise

Faculty development

Faculty development initiatives are organized under 2 principal strands: faculty development workshops and medical education seminars (Fig. 2, Supplement 2).

Faculty development workshops: Although instructional workshops predate 2004, they expanded considerably after the Medical

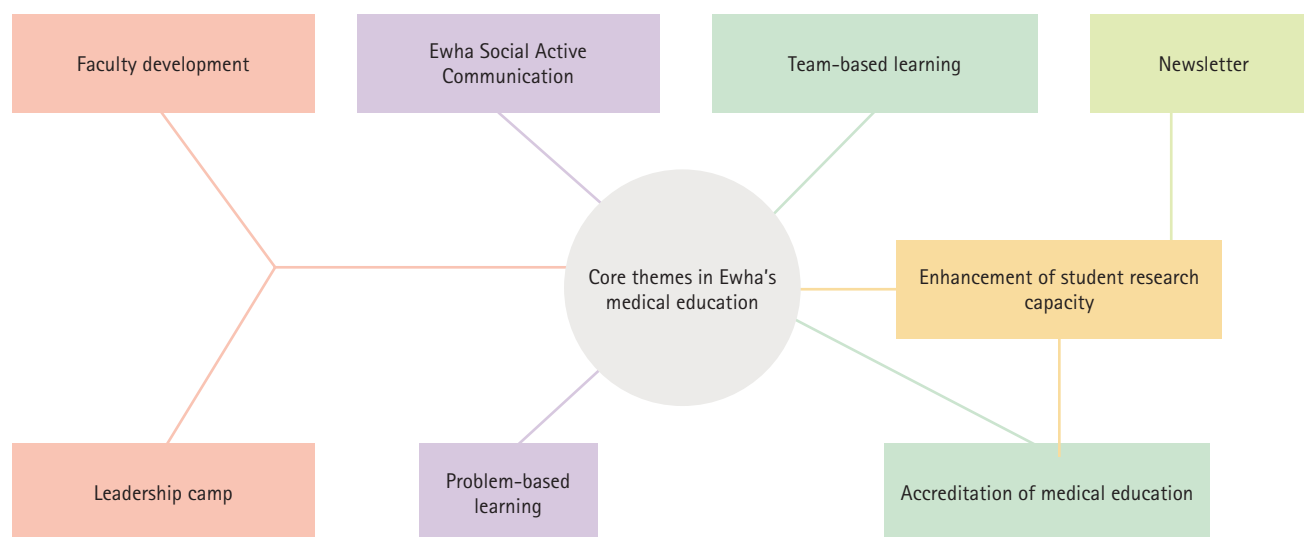


Fig. 2. Core themes of Ewha medical education (2025).

Education Office was established, with a practical emphasis on implementing the new curriculum. Early workshops focused on curriculum design, item writing for the national licensing examination, and clinical performance examination (CPX) assessment, providing a foundation for broad faculty participation. Beginning in 2006, specialized workshops for junior faculty were introduced, along with sessions on PBL, TBL, and integrated curriculum design. As the program evolved, topics diversified to include medical education research methods, mentoring, and department-specific pedagogical sessions. By the mid-2010s, the workshops shifted toward developing assessment literacy, featuring OSCE/CPX scoring conferences, advanced item-construction training, and course outcome workshops aligned with competency-based education. An annual college-wide retreat was established to foster a shared educational philosophy and collegial dialogue. Most workshops are now embedded in the academic calendar, with additional ad hoc sessions provided as new needs emerge.

Medical education seminars: Originally conceived as individual lectures on curriculum design and teaching methods, the seminar series broadened its scope after the 2011 “Social & Smart Learning” symposium, which highlighted new educational paradigms. In 2015, a thematic sequence titled “Philosophical Foundations of Medical Education” encouraged reflective discussions about the field’s intellectual core.

Since 2022, topics have become explicitly interdisciplinary and future-oriented, such as 3-dimensional atlases, metaverse-based instruction, physician-scientist training, medical artificial intelligence, innovative platforms, and the medical humanities. The 2023–2024 series explored optimizing formative assessment, the 6-year integrated curriculum, student-centered learning, entrepre-

neurship education, and debriefs from both international and domestic conferences. What began as a narrowly focused pedagogical series has grown into a multilayered forum that includes learners, faculty, and forward-looking strategy. The seminars are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 17:00, providing a regular venue for ongoing professional discussion ([Supplement 3](#)).

Leadership camp

Aligned with the College’s mission to cultivate “women leaders in health care,” a 2-day residential leadership workshop was introduced in 2006 for incoming graduate-entry students. The camp emphasized leadership, communication, and empathy through a combination of orientation activities, campus and historical tours, and interactive sessions. Evening programs paired students with alumnae mentors to transmit institutional heritage and values ([Supplement 4](#)).

The final cohort of graduate-entry students completed the program in 2016. Its objectives are now achieved through first-year orientation and the pre-medical course “Team Leadership Project,” reflecting the College’s ability to adapt to changing educational structures.

Ewha Social Active Communication

ESAC is an annual co-curricular lecture series launched in 2008 to broaden students’ professional and communicative perspectives. Speakers from medicine, public health, and diverse social sectors address global, cultural, and policy topics.

Early sessions explored themes such as the World Health Organization’s role, traditional medicine, women’s health and leadership, and comparative healthcare systems in Vietnam and the

United States. Subsequent years added sessions on the United States Medical Licensing Examination experience, Christian leadership, disability welfare, courageous women, Korean social trends, and international medical aid. Later installments addressed healthcare issues in Azerbaijan, African nations, and other regions.

Since 2014, topics have spanned evolving leadership paradigms, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund initiatives, pathogen genomics, and German psychiatric practices. Recent sessions—such as US healthcare innovation (2022) and digital health and ecological transitions (2023)—encourage students to rethink physicians' roles in future health systems. ESAC has become a key platform for nurturing globally aware, communication-focused professional identities ([Supplement 5](#)).

Problem-based learning

PBL was introduced in 2006 with 2 original modules for first- and second-year medical students. Initially, the cases were based on single diseases, such as hepatitis A or acute appendicitis, but the case library expanded by 2014 to include oncology, immunology, and obstetrics/gynecology topics.

A major update in 2015 introduced complex cases, including premenstrual syndrome, acute cholecystitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, that required integrative clinical reasoning. Between 2018 and 2019, the curriculum added advanced cardiovascular and respiratory cases (such as stable angina, hemoptysis, cerebral infarction) as well as end-stage colorectal cancer.

However, operational challenges related to securing sufficient tutors, ensuring objective assessment, and managing faculty workload increased over time. As a result, the Curriculum Committee voted on June 16, 2021, to discontinue "PBL I & II." After a period of transition, the last PBL session was delivered during the summer term of 2023.

Team-based learning

Introduced shortly after the Medical Education Office was founded, TBL initially targeted first- and second-year courses. In 2013, a dedicated TBL subcommittee was formed to coordinate new modules, and members visited the Catholic University's MASTER Center to benchmark best practices. Subsequent all-faculty workshops established broad support, and a purpose-built TBL classroom (Medical Building, Room 301) was opened after the move to the Magok campus.

Since 2023, semester-based TBL workshops have become routine, and legacy lectures are being systematically converted into TBL modules. Student feedback is collected and analyzed to drive iterative quality improvement. The current approach focuses on expanding TBL in pedagogically appropriate courses and topics

throughout the curriculum, rather than simply increasing the number of TBL sessions ([Supplement 6](#)).

Enhancement of student research capacity

A longitudinal Research-Intensive Curriculum integrates research training from the first pre-medical year through the fourth medical year. Foundational courses—such as "Basic Experimental Techniques," "Research Design and Data Analysis," "Manuscript Writing and Presentation," and "Individualized Medical Science Research"—develop core competencies. Advanced electives, including "Advanced Medical Science Research," are available during the early clinical years, while a fourth-year elective allows for full-time laboratory immersion.

A 2024 curriculum reform introduced the spiral "Creative Challenge Research Track," which begins in the first pre-medical semester and continues through the second semester of the second clinical year. Early theoretical training is now offered as "Foundations of Creative Research," and a new course, "Creative Research Challenge," has been introduced ([Supplement 7](#)).

Newsletter

Since the inception of the Medical Education Office, a college-wide newsletter has played a vital role in disseminating key educational news and fostering internal communication. Following the establishment of the Ewha Center for Medical Education in 2022, a dedicated Ewha Medical Education Newsletter was launched. Published quarterly in March, June, September, and December, this newsletter covers faculty development, educational innovation, student-centered initiatives, and more. Issues are distributed by email to all campus members, provided in print on campus, and mailed to all 39 Korean medical colleges, thereby enhancing inter-institutional collaboration and visibility ([Supplement 8](#)).

Accreditation of medical education

Ewha received full accreditation during the second accreditation cycle in 2009 and was awarded a 5-year "Excellent" rating in 2010. Subsequent comprehensive reviews in 2014 and 2020 resulted in the highest 6-year accreditation status, attesting to the College's continued excellence in educational systems and outcomes. Interim reviews in 2022 and 2024 maintained the 6-year term, underscoring the strength of Ewha's quality assurance processes. These distinctions reflect the College's comprehensive efforts in curriculum development, assessment improvement, faculty development, and infrastructural enhancement, solidifying its national and international reputation.

Conclusion

By systematically analyzing 2 decades of accumulated materials (2004–2025) across chronological phases and thematic domains, this study has illuminated both the developmental trajectory of medical education at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine and the underlying educational philosophy. The archival review revealed significance beyond administrative restructuring—a sustained commitment to embedding Ewha’s distinctive identity in every aspect of teaching and learning.

Since the launch of the Medical Education Office in 2004, Ewha’s program has advanced through intensive faculty development, curricular innovation, assessment system refinement, and the introduction of integrative, interdisciplinary teaching. At every stage, the dedication and collaboration of faculty members and professional staff have been crucial in shaping and expanding the educational enterprise, resulting in the robust framework in place today. These milestones are not isolated events, but rather represent an organic continuum of institutional growth. What began as the seed of educational practice has—over time—matured into a thriving, interconnected forest. This living forest stands as both a testament to past achievements and a foundation for the future advancement of Ewha’s medical education.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the progress chronicled here reflects not only the accomplishments of the past 20 years, but also the ongoing efforts of countless predecessors who, since the College’s founding, have dedicated themselves to cultivating women leaders in Korean healthcare.

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Authors’ contribution

Conceptualization: IK, SJK, SMJ. Data curation: ARK. Methodology: SMJ. Formal analysis/validation: SMJ, IK. Project administration: HJJ. Writing—original draft: SMJ, HJJ. Writing—review & editing: SJK, HJJ, ARK.

Conflict of interest

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Data availability

Not applicable.

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Supplementary materials

Supplementary files are available from <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/REHLFQ>

Supplement 1. Commemorative photograph celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Department of Medical Education, Ewha Womans University College of Medicine.

Supplement 2. Principal themes addressed in the Ewha faculty development workshops.

Supplement 3. Major topics covered in the Ewha medical education seminar series.

Supplement 4. Photographs from the Ewha graduate-entry leadership camp.

Supplement 5. List of lecture themes in the Ewha Social Active Communication (ESAC) program.

Supplement 6. Photographic documentation related to team-based learning at Ewha.

Supplement 7. Core team-based learning courses offered at Ewha Womans University College of Medicine.

Supplement 8. Issues of the Ewha Medical Education Newsletter.

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