BACKGROUND: The new licensing regulations for physicians introduced in 2002 place core competencies in the field of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy at the centre of medical training and have been considered to constitute a favourable opportunity for psychosocial faculties. To date, no data have been published concerning the consequences of these new regulations. METHODS: All 34 chairs of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy currently held by professors were surveyed by means of a written questionnaire at the beginning of the year 2006, regarding the present teaching situation and changes occurring through the introduction of the new regulations, as well as particular problem areas and respective solutions and suggestions. RESULTS: The rate of return for the questionnaires was 100 %. The consequences of the new regulations were rated predominantly positively. From a content point of view, classes continue to be more heavily weighted in cognitive areas and less so in areas of clinical practice; demands for an emphasis on affective learning objectives hence appear to have not been adequately met thus far. The newly established course formats (cross-sectional areas, obligatory optional courses, tutorials) also appear to have been employed to a rather limited degree. In addition to a lack of resources, the co-ordination...
with other specialist areas as well as the adequate assessment of teaching content poses a particular problem. DISCUSSION: The field of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy constitutes an important engine for the didactic and content-related advancement of the medical curriculum in Germany. Nevertheless, the opportunities which the new licensing regulations for physicians offer to psychosocial faculties have not yet been entirely made use of. Surveyed individuals consider nationwide agreement concerning learning objectives, an exchange of experiences regarding the efficient and creative use of available resources and the development of suitable assessment methodologies, to be tasks to be urgently undertaken.