



MEDICAL  
UNIVERSITY  
OF WARSAW



**eua** EUROPEAN  
UNIVERSITY  
ASSOCIATION

# EARLY ENTRY INTO DOCTORAL TRAINING IN MEDICINE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING PHYSICIAN-SCIENTISTS IN EUROPEAN DOCTORAL SCHOOLS ON THE BASIS OF THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

ALEKSANDRA ZACNY

PHD CANDIDATE

DEPARTMENT OF NEONATOLOGY AND INTENSIVE CARE OF A NEWBORN

SECRETARY OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS' GOVERNMENT

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

# THE CHALLENGE



Longer, more demanding  
training delays  
independence



Instability and funding  
pressures



Reduced research funding  
and strong financial  
incentives in clinical  
practice



Heavy clinical workloads  
and administrative  
requirements



## **THE NEEDS**

**EUROPE NEEDS MORE PHYSICIAN-SCIENTISTS**

# EUROPEAN DOCTORAL EDUCATION CONTEXT

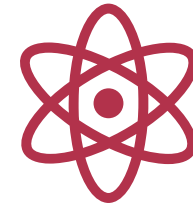


**Doctoral schools as structured training environments**



**Increasing focus on:**

transferable skills  
non-academic careers  
societal impact



**Strong emphasis on:**

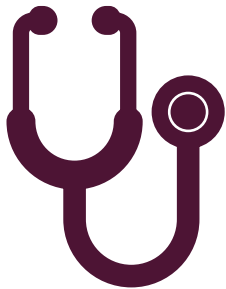
interdisciplinarity  
collaboration beyond academia



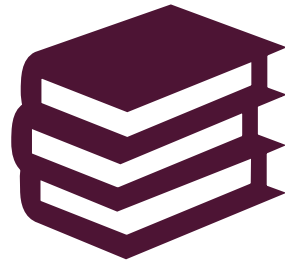
## **KEY QUESTION**

**WHEN SHOULD RESEARCH TRAINING BEGIN?**

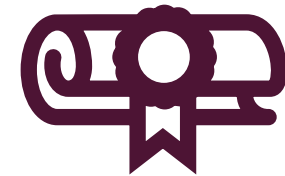
# POSSIBLE STRATEGIES



**PhD after completing medical studies**



**PhD after residency**



**MD-PhD programs**

PhD between preclinical and clinical stages  
extends medical training by 3–4 years



## **THE IDEA**

**COMBINE ADVANCED RESEARCH TRAINING WITH  
ONGOING MEDICAL EDUCATION**

# CASE: MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW



## **Eligibility:**

after 3rd year of medical program



## **Selection based on:**

CV (publications, conferences)

PhD research proposal



## **Students combine:**

medical education

doctoral research

# 2024/2025

	<b>WUM Student PhD</b>	Medical sciences
Number of places available	<b>10</b>	38
Number of people applying	<b>16</b>	61
Highest score	<b>93,2</b>	89,75
Lowest score	<b>79,84</b>	54,33
Median score of qualified students	<b>87,3</b>	69,6

# 2025/2026

	<b>WUM Student PhD</b>	Medical sciences
Number of places available	<b>10</b>	38
Number of people applying	<b>13</b>	68
Highest score	<b>84,66</b>	86,3
Lowest score	<b>52,83</b>	63,5
Median score of qualified students	<b>78,7</b>	73,9

# INTERPRETATION

Early-entry medical students achieve **high selection scores**

Their profiles already include:  
research activity  
publications  
conference participation

They are **competitive with post-graduate candidates**

# ADVANTAGES

**Early entry does  
not lower  
standards**

High-potential  
candidates are  
identifiable **before  
graduation**

Research readiness  
develops **during  
medical studies**

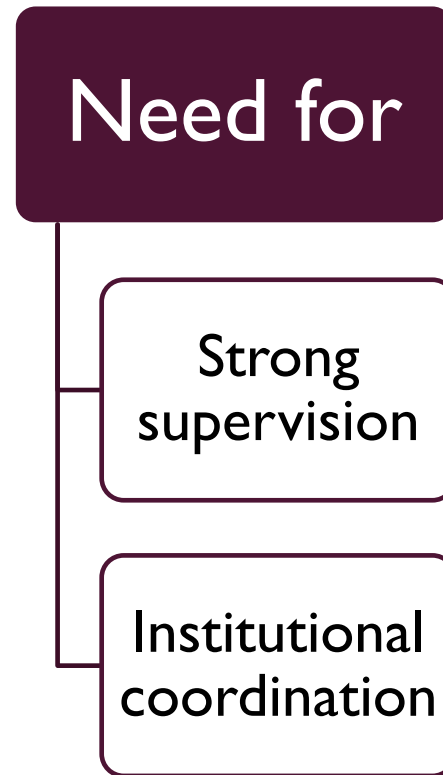
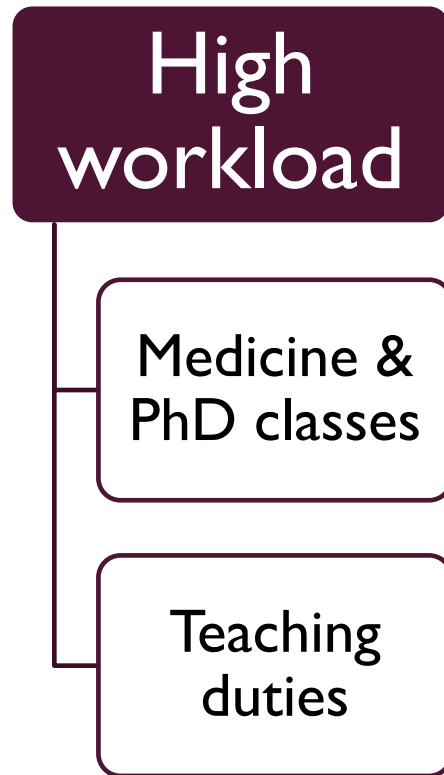
# INTERDISCIPLINARY DIMENSION

- Integration of:
  - clinical practice
  - biomedical research
- Development of:
  - hybrid competencies
  - “boundary-spanning” researchers
- Collaboration across:
  - universities
  - hospitals
  - research teams

# SOCIETAL DIMENSION

- Research aligned with:
  - clinical needs
  - health system challenges
- Early integration within:
  - healthcare institutions
  - academic environments
- Contributes to:
  - stronger academia–healthcare links
  - shorter research–practice gap
- Supports:
  - societal impact
  - cross-sectoral collaboration

# CHALLENGES



# CONCLUSIONS

Early doctoral entry  
is **feasible and effective**

Supports **interdisciplinary  
integration**

Strengthens **societal  
relevance** of doctoral  
education

---

# THANK YOU



Aleksandra Zacny

[aleksandra.zacny@wum.edu.pl](mailto:aleksandra.zacny@wum.edu.pl)

[www.wum.edu.pl](http://www.wum.edu.pl)