INTRODUCTION

In order to meet the educational needs of new osteopathic medical graduates, it is imperative for the osteopathic medical schools to assist osteopathic graduate medical education (OGME) programs in creating new collaborations with existing allopathic postgraduate training programs (ACGME). One potential new affiliation is with the Veterans Health Administration in the form of Veterans Hospitals and VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

RATIONALE

Interprofessional education must include consideration of existing ACGME programs. Institutions with ACGME affiliations often have a long history of high quality educational programs and well trained faculty, hence forgoing the need for new faculty development. Furthermore, osteopathic physicians often make up a portion of the faculty at ACGME training sites and are eager to participate in new osteopathic medical education partnerships.

BENEFITS

Many potential benefits exist for both osteopathic trainees and the VA

1. VA Hospitals have increasing numbers of female Veterans, thereby increasing diversity
2. Veterans often have multiple co-morbid medical conditions, creating a rich environment for individuals studying primary care
3. VA Hospitals have faculty with co-appointments at allopathic medical institutions that typically have established faculty development programs
4. Incorporating osteopathic postgraduate trainees into VA Hospitals will potentially create employment opportunities for these trainees
5. The VA is actively involved in program development for the management of chronic medical conditions which is complementary to the osteopathic mission of encouraging primary care specialties for its physicians
6. Most learners rate their training at the VA as excellent or good and most would recommend the experience to others
7. The VA may serve as a unique funding source for expanding graduate medical education training opportunities

BARRIERS TO AFFILIATIONS

There are barriers to partnering with VA facilities that have existing ACGME affiliations

1. Concern about competition between new learners and existing learners
   a. Are there adequate patients and faculty to serve all learners?
   b. Do new learners create excess work for existing learners?
2. Lack of understanding about osteopathic medical education by VA Hospitals
3. Lack of qualified or interested osteopathic physician faculty at VA Hospitals
4. Lack of physician champions interested in creating partnerships

HOW TO START THE PROCESS

1. Identify physician champion in VA facility
2. Identify needs in osteopathic graduate medical education program
3. Identify needs in VA facility
4. Involve faculty at VA in needed specialty and create buy-in
5. Discuss with Designated Educational Officer (DEO) at VA facility
6. Discuss with Designated Institutional Officer (DIO) at ACGME affiliated residency program
7. Create consensus about evaluation of the impact of new learners on existing learners
8. Write curriculum for the rotation (usually done by VA faculty)
9. Generate an affiliation agreement and include signatures from the OGME program Director of Medical Education (DME), the sponsoring osteopathic medical school, the local DEO, the VA regional office, and the VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA).

OUTCOMES

As a result of this work, the Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center (PVAMC), Portland, OR has created an affiliation with Samaritan Health Services (SHS), Corvallis, OR OGME programs including family medicine, internal medicine cardiology, traditional rotating internship, general surgery, psychiatry, and orthopedic surgery. Those residents are currently rotating in the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) at PVAMC under the direction of the medical director of the MICU who is an osteopathic medical intensivist. Further collaboration continues with plans for adding SHS residents to rotations in the PVAMC Emergency Department in July 2011 and inpatient and outpatient endocrinology and hematology/oncology. Further discussions regarding neurology and outpatient rotations in CBOCs are ongoing.

We anticipate that this will continue to expand and be a successful affiliation, particularly since work hour restrictions for all postgraduate trainees create more opportunities for learners to participate in the care of our nation’s Veterans.

CONTACT

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