Relevance of Research Experiences for Practice and Placement of DMU-COM Students

Martin Schmidt, PhD | Biochemistry and Nutrition | Des Moines University | mschmidt@dmu.edu

Objective
To correlate the subjective value that students place on active participation in research for their careers with objective measures of the importance of practical research experience for successful residency placement.

Research at DMU
Students actively conducting research: A DMU student conducting Biochemical research with Dr. Maria Barnes. At DMU, Medical Students actively participate in research through mentored internships and elective clerkships.

Student Expectations
Student expectations: Student expectations on active research participation during their careers were analyzed using a multi-item questionnaire. The number of research experiences was correlated with the objective importance of research for the selection into their specialty.

DMU Research
Students acquiring research experience at DMU: Student participation in research activities was ascertained using data reported to the DMU Research Office (2015-2021). For each of the DMU-COM 20/21 residency-matched graduates, the number of research experiences was correlated with the objective importance of research for the selection into their specialty.

Discussion and Conclusions
The study answered three key questions about the value of active participation in research for DMU-COM students. First, do students expect to conduct research projects after graduation for which such experiences would be useful? Our analysis shows that the majority of students (65%) are open or committed to such projects; a sizeable minority has no plans to participate and instead prefers to focus on patient care – a common attitude among osteopathic medical graduates [6, 7]. Second, would research participation be helpful for graduates? For the majority (74%) of DMU students, research experiences are not very important as they will be matching into specialties that place a lower value on this criterion; however, for about 10% of DMU graduates such experiences are very important as they are a prime selection criterion. Third, are students matching into competitive specialties seeking out research experiences at DMU? Our data show that the students matching into competitive specialties indeed report a significantly higher number of research experiences during UME.

Conclusions: Students aiming to join competitive specialties recognize that active participation in research is an important selection criterion and are seeking out such experiences at DMU. Student research participation is more common at MD schools, seemingly putting DO graduates at a disadvantage in the competition for residency slots [8-10]. This suggests that strengthening the research curriculum while focusing the efforts on students aiming for competitive residencies is a sensible strategy to improve the match outcomes and to prepare interested graduates for future participation in clinical research.

References