Establishing Academic Pre-Doctoral Medicine Fellowships to Alleviate the Trained Medical Educator Shortage

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ABSTRACT

Although there has been much talk about the upcoming physician shortage crisis, very little attention has been given to the imminent medical educator shortage. The Council on Graduate Medical Education recommends that medical schools expand the number of graduates by 3,000 per year by 2015, requiring the equivalent of about twenty new schools. However, expansion in class size and in the number of schools will require an increase in the number of trained academic physician instructors - approximately 5,000 new full-time professors over the next fourteen years.

The New York College of Osteopathic Medicine established an Academic Medicine Fellowship to train students to pursue careers in academic medicine, including medical education, research, and clinical practice in an academic health care setting. Fellows spend a total of five years in medical school, and the school pays for the last three years of education. Fellows not only work in labs and lectures, but also are enrolled in educational courses on campus and on line (AACOM Educational Modules), attend research seminars and journal clubs, and conduct research projects.

Good training and experience leads to an expert understanding of a specific content matter; however, it vital that medical educators be able to deliver that content in a way that is understandable and relevant. That is where the Academic Medicine Fellowship comes into play. Medical schools, both public and private, should implement a fellowship modeled after NYCOM’s program to meet the need for medical educators expert in clinical medicine as well as research and teaching methods.