The Merits of a Formalized Training Program to Develop Academic Physicians: Establishing Academic Pre-Doctoral Medicine Fellowships to Alleviate the Trained Medical Educator Shortage


Background

Although there has been much talk about the upcoming physician shortage crisis, very little attention has been given to the imminent medical educator shortage. In response to the projected shortage the allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO) professions are opening new medical schools and increasing class size. The Council on Graduate Medical Education recommends medical schools expand the number of graduates by 3,000 per year by 2015, requiring the equivalent of about 20 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.

The New York College of Osteopathic Medicine established a formalized 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 agree to stay an extra year, spending a total of five years in medical school, and the school pays for the last three years of education.

Fellows are selected by a steering committee made up of a representative from each of the participating departments. Candidates submit a letter detailing why they want to become academic fellows and a CV. The committee evaluates the student’s academic record, teaching and research experience, including papers and abstracts. In addition, commitment to pursue a career in academic medicine is a major factor in the selection process.

Curriculum

- **Education:** Complete AACOM education modules before graduation and lecture, facilitate small group learning, and teach in various labs including OMM, anatomy, and neuroscience
- **Research:** Complete NYCOM Introduction to Research course and submit an abstract or paper for presentation and publication before graduation. Every fellow must attend and present at the NYCOM Journal Club monthly meetings
- **Clinical:** Rotate in the NYCOM family practice or OMM clinic
- **Additional seminars:** International Association of Medical Science Educators Webcast Audo Seminars, and an on campus seminar series on “How to succeed in an Academic Medical Environment”

Goals

The fellowship, while important in exposing and training students to academia, can never take the place of excellent residency training and experience. Good training and experience leads to an expert understanding of specific content matter; however, it is vital that academic physicians be able to deliver content that is understandable and relevant, advance the scholarly underpinnings of the science and art of the practice of medicine, and ultimately to thrive in an academic setting.