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Geriatric Education Update

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Geriatric Education Update

Despite extensive government cutbacks in funding for aging research and elimination of federal support for geriatric and gerontological training, Jefferson has launched exciting new programs in this area. The year-old Division of Geriatric Medicine, housed within the Dept. of Family and Community Medicine, is under the directorship of Dr. Christine Arenson. In collaboration with CARAH, the Dept. of Occupational Therapy and the Dept. of Nursing, the Division has received funding for a Geriatric Education Center.



Christine Arenson, MD sees a patient at the Philadelphia Senior Center with a Jefferson Medical student.

In addition to Drs. Arenson and Gitlin, participants in this initiative include Dr. Cecelia Borden (Dept. of Nursing), Stephen Kern (Dept. of Occupational Therapy), Nancy Chernett (CARAH), Tracey Vause-Earland (CARAH, Dept. of OT) as well as education partnerships with Marywood University in Scranton and Christiana Care Health Services in Delaware. The Geriatric Education Center, funded for this year by the Bureau of Health Professions, will support expanded curriculum, student and continuing education opportunities, and development of a one-year certificate program in geriatrics/gerontology for interdisciplinary teams of faculty from our region.

More Good News

Three Division faculty members, Drs. Christine Arenson, Susan Parks, and Christine Hsieh, were recent recipients of the Bureau of Health Profession's Geriatric Academic Career Awards. Also, the Division has focused on undergraduate, residency, and fellowship education. Despite difficulties nationally in recruiting geriatric fellows, Jefferson's fellowship program has thrived, attracting highly qualified applicants each year. Beginning July 2006, four new fellows will be joining the program.

On another front, the Jefferson Medical College continues to develop important interdisciplinary geriatric education initiatives. It recently benefited from a two-year grant from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the John A. Hartford Foundation to enhance geriatric education among undergraduate medical students. This resulted in important sustained curricular changes, including increased attention to gerontology and geriatrics in the didactic curriculum, greater use of older adults and emphasis on differences across the lifespan in clinical examples, and development of specific geriatric experiences during clinical rotations.

In partnership with the Philadelphia Senior Center, and with additional support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Division worked with faculty from the Depts. of Nursing and Occupational Therapy and CARAH to develop the Social Service / Health Independence Program (SHIP), a unique interdisciplinary service-learning model. SHIP provides health

and wellness education, screenings, social services, and health care to the over 9,000 members of the Philadelphia Senior Center. Jefferson faculty work as a team to train literally hundreds of Jefferson occupational therapy, nursing, and medical students, as well as Thomas Jefferson University Hospital residents and fellows. Our students provide excellent care while learning the value of working on interdisciplinary teams in providing integrated care to older adults within their communities.