

Thomas Jefferson University Primary Care Population Health Research Fellowship: A New Partnership

As our healthcare system experiences shifting cost pressures and a demand for a higher quality of care together with optimized patient experience, a need has grown for physician leaders who are trained and prepared to develop and implement population health strategies within complex health delivery systems. A recent partnership between the Thomas Jefferson University Department of Family & Community Medicine (DFCM) and the Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH) aims to address this gap with a novel fellowship offering. This fellowship offers a 2-year Population Health Track¹ for its Primary Care Faculty Development Research Fellowship, open to Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, and Pediatric physicians. The fellowship is partially funded by a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Primary Care Training and Enhancement Award (principal investigator, Christine Arenson, MD, Chair of the DCFM). In July 2016, I was thrilled to become the inaugural full-time population health research fellow.

Convinced of the power of population-level thinking while completing medical school at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, I decided to become a family physician because of its big picture, holistic and preventive focus. During my residency training at Thomas Jefferson University, I found great satisfaction in ensuring that my patients' preventive health needs were addressed, and I continued to be impressed with the huge gaps and disparities in care that

were often too late to prevent in the clinic. New models of care emphasizing upstream, proactive management of populations spurred my interest. I wanted to equip myself in order to "change one population at a time" in addition to one patient at a time, as Mary Cooper, MD, JD and director of the JCPH Healthcare Quality and Safety programs, says. Finishing my final year as chief resident, I could not wait to begin.

The population health research fellowship combines the resources of the traditional DFCM primary care faculty development research fellowship with the resources of JCPH. Fellows work under the guidance of a mentorship team described in Table 1, led by Randa Sifri, MD. Effort is divided among master's level coursework, research, continuity clinic time, and other key conferences and experiences. Under the direct mentorship of David Nash, MD, MBA, Dean of JCPH, fellows participate in several health system quality and operational committees and population health conference opportunities, which have served to build experience in these environments and guide insight into the opportunities and challenges facing health systems. Exposure to the leadership and workings of the Delaware Valley Accountable Care Organization, one of the largest ACOs in the country, provides another distinct perspective.

Fellows may pursue one of several relevant degrees at JCPH,² or outside Jefferson. To strengthen my knowledge of the principles

of high-value care and how to change physician behavior, I chose to pursue the MS in Healthcare Quality and Safety at JCPH. Courses are 100% online and provide flexibility of schedule and networking opportunities with a diverse array of seasoned colleagues from across the country.

Under the research guidance of Dr. Sifri, Dr. LaNoue, and Dr. Rabinowitz, I am pursuing research interests of importance to our institution. Currently in the final planning stages, I am helping to lead a multidisciplinary team in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a care coordinator-driven readmissions reduction pilot program for pneumonia patients. Reducing readmissions has become a recognized sign of quality, and has necessarily become a national priority with significant potential penalties for institutions that underperform as compared to their peers. This has served as a real world case study in which to apply important concepts of quality improvement learned in the classroom. We will present our design and implementation process at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Society of General Internal Medicine.

Additionally, I have had the opportunity to present a poster on the "Development of a Toolkit for Quality Improvement and Leadership Training for Residents and Students" at the North American Primary Care Research Group Annual Meeting. This work reflected an ongoing effort to enhance standardized training in quality and leadership for trainees in our department through the use of a unique online learning platform. I will continue to be involved in additional research projects moving forward, including an examination of ambulatory practice transformation efforts on quality metrics.

I am just over half of a year into the population health research fellowship, and

Table 1. Key Stakeholders

Randa Sifri, MD	Fellowship Director, DCFM
Marianna LaNoue, PhD	Associate Fellowship Director, DCFM
Howard Rabinowitz, MD	Assistant Fellowship Director, DCFM
David Nash, MD, MBA	Dean of JCPH

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its benefits have become abundantly clear. Providing immersion in an ideal environment for understanding health systems and population health management through a complement of research opportunities and valuable experiences, the Primary Care Faculty Development Research Fellowship-- Population Health Track will prepare leaders for research, policy, and primary care and health systems leadership careers. I look forward to continuing my participation in the fellowship and in seeing it grow each year.

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