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Student Research Program in Family Medicine

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Student Research Program in Family Medicine

Since 1988, the faculty in the Department of Family Medicine has worked with JMC students in a Summer Assistantship program designed to introduce them to the world of academic family practice. There are four components to the program: didactic sessions, active research, clinical observation, and presentations. The fourteen didactic sessions cover research methods, research design, statistical analysis, and several specific primary care issues such as family medicine as a career, and rural practice. Clinical time offers some grounding in real-life family practice and consists of observing faculty who are providing patient care in the Family Practice Center, and accompanying the department's Home Visit team.

In the summer of 1995, nine students who had completed their first year at Jefferson were selected from among the group of 30 who had applied. The program is full-time for the summer and includes a stipend. This program gives the student an opportunity for immersion in a clinical and academic department and allows them to make substantial progress toward completing a research project. While there are exceptions, the projects are typically self-contained, designed with a primary care focus that allows the students to be part of the team and to work closely with their research mentor.

The nine projects for 1995, the students and their mentors were:

Screening for Hypertension in the Community
Vincent Anthony
Michael P. Rosenthal, MD

Family Physicians' Propensity to Prescribe Drugs to the Elderly
Lori Brand
Karen D. Novielli, MD

Attitudes and Beliefs of Family Physicians Regarding Telemedicine
Elizabeth Dirnberger

John L. Randall, MD

Specialty Selection Factors Among Jefferson Medical Students
Ed Harding
Fred W. Markham, MD

Making Effective Referrals in a Managed Care System
Jonathan S. Harris
James D. Plumb, MD

Attitudes Regarding Advance Directives
Ed King
Robert L. Perkel, MD

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Assessment of Obesity in a Family Practice Setting
Robert Noll
James S. Studdiford, MD

Factors Patients Consider in Contraception Choice
Jennifer Parish
Leslie A. Everts, MD

Perception of Health-Related Community Problems
Melanie Pogach
Randa D. Sifri, MD

The final activity required of each student is a formal presentation of their project to the department. This is conducted as it would be at a national meeting, with a fixed time period as well as questions from the audience.

The students are evaluated on their progress and they, in turn, evaluate the program. We find that the students rate it highly, but each year do provide valuable suggestions, as well. Long-term, we know that many of the participants enter primary care residencies. We view the program as part of the experiences that help shape their specialty choice decisions.

About the Author

James J. Diamond, PhD, is Director of Research in the Department of Family Medicine, Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University.