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## **A Medical Student's Experience in the Dean's Summer Research Program**

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## A Medical Student's Experience in the Dean's Summer Research Program

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During the summer of 2004, I participated in the Dean's Summer Research Program in "General Medicine." The program awards scholarships to five medical students who will select from a number of areas to conduct research. My fellow students selected ophthalmology, dermatology, and vascular surgery. I chose to work in the Department of Health Policy with Dr. David Nash as my advisor. During the ten-week program, I successfully completed two projects that I think will contribute to the Department's mission of improving the quality of healthcare. Concurrently, I learned a great deal about the healthcare system that is seldom taught in traditional medical education, yet significantly affects every physician.

My first project was to research and analyze the growing use of economic evaluations in the U.S. healthcare system. This analysis included a broad scope of information, ranging from current financial constraints on U.S. healthcare to international experiences with economic evaluation. Drawing from my research, I co-authored a book chapter predicting the future use of economic evaluation in the U.S. healthcare system. This will be the final chapter in a book used to educate healthcare professionals about the need for economic evaluations to determine the value of healthcare.

At the same time, I conducted a second project concerning medical education. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has introduced new competency requirements for all residency programs. I researched two of these competencies, one requiring skills for self-assessment and improvement, and the other requiring understanding of and effective practice in current healthcare systems. My research included the rationale for instituting these competencies and the best methods for teaching and assessing them. Utilizing this research, I helped Dr. Nash prepare a teaching module that will educate residency program directors on how to meet the competency requirements. The module will be published and made available by the Graduate Education Foundation.

In addition to these projects, I attended various conferences and meetings with leaders in health policy. These included conferences with national leaders such as the Pennsylvania Healthcare Cost Containment Council, the Disease Management Colloquium, and the Summer Seminar, which addressed the Medicare Modernization Act. At these conferences I met people with expertise in important areas of healthcare such as industry, hospital administration, and government. I also sat in on meetings within our own institution such as Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee meetings and management updates. These meetings helped me understand the management of a large academic hospital.

Overall, the summer experience greatly enhanced my understanding of healthcare. I now have a much greater appreciation for what role the physician has in the overall healthcare system. I plan to utilize this knowledge throughout my career so that I can be effective as a physician leader. I am fortunate that Jefferson Medical College is one of a few medical schools to offer research opportunities to medical students in health policy. Any medical students interested in becoming a leader in their field or simply understanding critical issues in healthcare should apply for this program.

Jeffrey Clough: A Medical Student's Experience in the Dean's Summer Research Program

For more information on the Dean's Summer Research Program in General Medicine and other research opportunities available to medical students, contact Karen Novielli, MD, Assistant Dean for Faculty Affairs, Associate Professor of Family Medicine, at karen.novielli@jefferson.edu, or visit [http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/Researchers/student\\_research/jmc.html](http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/Researchers/student_research/jmc.html).

**About the Author**

Jeffrey Clough is a member of the Class of 2007 at Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University.