

Area of Concentration and Geriatrics Certificate Program for Medical Students



at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

SUMMARY

Target Audience

All medical students

Purpose

To promote interest in aging as part of a medical career, regardless of chosen specialty and clinical or academic path

Program

A variety of activities to introduce students to geriatrics, including a voluntary four-year program leading to a Certificate in Geriatrics in addition to the MD degree

History

The Area of Concentration Program began in the 1990s; Geriatric Medicine was the second of eight areas created

Operating Costs

Faculty coordinator (5%); administrative assistant (5%); group meetings; case studies; summer training

Outcomes

The program has had 20-35 new participants each year and 8-10 complete the Certificate annually. Of these, one to three go on to pursue a career in geriatric medicine

Available Materials

Program Outline; Case Series Description and Approach to Case Presentation; Scholarly Project Overview; GEMS Topics and Interview Questions

For More Information

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Program Overview

The Area of Concentration in Geriatric Medicine aims to encourage students to consider a career in aging by promoting an interest in aging as part of a medical career, regardless of chosen specialty and clinical or academic path. Completion of the four-year program leads to a Certificate in Geriatrics in addition to the MD degree. The program combines clinical and research experiences with didactic instruction to enhance students' understanding of the complex health issues affecting older adults.

The Area of Concentration program began in the 1990s because students were interested in medicine-related activities outside of the usual medical school activities. The Geriatric Medicine Concentration was the second of eight concentration areas that were created.

Program Operations

During the first year, students participate in a home visit program, completing six home visits over the school year, as well as six monthly group sessions to talk about their home visits with peers.

Between the first and second year, about 20 students each year complete a summer research experience. During the second year, students participate in a monthly geriatrics case series linked to the organ system based curriculum. Up to 60-70 primarily second-year students participate in a clinical discussion that focuses on the age-related aspects of the organ system they are studying. This helps integrate patient care with class learning, as well as giving the students a perspective on how age affects a person's organs.

Students are also involved in a scholarly project related to aging, which must result in a manuscript



to be published or a paper to be submitted to faculty. (Note: all medical students are required to do a scholarly project).

In the third year, students participate in a month-long clinical rotation.

In the fourth year, students choose an aging elective for research or a focused clinical activity and attend a variety of social events.

Students who complete a research project present at the American Geriatrics Society annual meeting during their second or fourth year.

Students in all years attend a series of evening sessions with visiting speakers. Student leaders organize and promote most of the activities. Students are welcome to participate in any components of the four-year program without being required to complete the Area of Concentration in Geriatrics.

Staffing Requirements

A faculty member from the Geriatrics Division serves as the program coordinator (5% FTE) and an administrative staff coordinator handles program logistics (5% FTE). Lectures, mentoring of research activities, and clinical experiences are all provided by faculty volunteers.

Program Costs and Funding Sources

The medical school pays 5% of the faculty member's salary to coordinate the program. Costs for group meetings and case studies reach a few thousand dollars and are covered by foundation and internal sources. Summer training costs are covered by training grants, and administrative costs are 5-10% of a secretary's time.

Funding comes from the Hartford Center of Excellence, the Geriatrics Division, National Institute on Aging T32 and T35 grants, and the American Geriatrics Society state affiliate. The Geriatric Medicine program collaborates with the medical school's Hartford Center of

Excellence and T32 program in Geriatric Psychiatry.

Process and Outcomes Data

The program has an average of 25-35 participants per year, with 8-10 obtaining the Certificate in Geriatrics. Not all students participate in all Area of Concentration in Aging activities, and not all participants complete the entire program. It is estimated that one to three of those who obtain the Certificate pursue a career in geriatric medicine.

Measures of success include:

- number of student participants by year
- number of participants in summer research programs
- number of students who select an aging topic for the required medical school scholarly project
- number of graduates with a Certificate in Geriatrics
- initial and long-term career choice.

Implementation Lessons

- Students become engaged in and excited about the program in the first year because it provides opportunities for encounters with patients. These students become the program's best recruiters, particularly through word-of-mouth.
- Consistency of faculty leadership has been important to the program's ongoing success and has resulted in wide acceptance within the medical school.

Available Materials

Tools/Resources

- Program Outline
- Case Series Description and Approach to Case Presentation
- Scholarly Project Overview
- GEMS Topics and Interview Questions



For More Information

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This document is part of a compilation of approaches to geriatrics recruitment, career development, and programmatic expansion, based on the work of the John A. Hartford Foundation "Centers of Excellence in Geriatric Medicine and Training." For more information, visit www.afar.org/recruitment or www.jhartfound.org.

