

One-Year Course in Research Methods and Design for Geriatrics Fellows and Junior Faculty

at Weill Medical College of Cornell University



SUMMARY

Target Audience

First- and second-year geriatrics fellows, as well as interested junior faculty from the Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology

Purpose

To provide the core research methods and design skills necessary for success as a clinician-investigator or clinician-educator

Program

A year-long course of weekly one-hour lectures on research methodology with discussion of research papers based on the lecture topics; mandatory for geriatrics fellows

History

The course was first offered in 2005-06 and was implemented for the second time in 2007-08

Operating Costs

Course director and two faculty members (total 5-7.5% FTE)

Outcomes

The course has been enthusiastically reviewed by the first two cohorts of fellows/junior faculty participants

Available Materials

Course Syllabus

For More Information

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Program Overview

This year-long course aims to teach first- and second-year geriatrics fellows, as well as interested junior faculty, core research methods and design skills. The course covers topics such as clinical epidemiology, research architecture, biostatistics, health services research, and qualitative methods, and provides training in data entry, analysis, and programming. Given the shortage of geriatrics clinician-investigators and clinician-educators, it is particularly important that geriatrics fellows receive a firm grounding in fundamental research skills to help ensure their success in academic geriatrics.

The course is mandatory for first- and second-year geriatrics fellows.

Program Operations

The course meets for one hour each week. Students are required to read journal articles that address points covered in weekly didactic lectures and are then asked questions about the articles that reinforce key concepts covered in each class. In 2009 the course will be offered to interested faculty and fellows throughout the Weill Cornell institution.

Staffing Requirements

Three core faculty teach the classes, including the Hartford Centers of Excellence Director. An administrative assistant distributes reading assignments and discussion questions to attendees on a weekly basis.

Program Costs and Funding Sources

Each session requires about 2.5 hours of preparation time; between the course director and the two faculty who participate, the total amount of



effort over the course of the year is 5-7.5%. The administrative assistant requires approximately 1% FTE.

The seminar was developed and implemented under the Hartford Centers of Excellence grant.

Process and Outcomes Data

Participants are surveyed at the completion of the course regarding their likes/dislikes and what they would like to see changed in the future. The course was enthusiastically evaluated by the first cohort of fellows/junior faculty. Participants felt that the course was instrumental in helping them to conduct original research, strengthened and consolidated their understanding of biostatistics (particularly multivariable analysis), and helped them to develop and implement better age-relevant research questions/hypotheses. Many reported that the course helped to lay the foundation for further research training. Sections on research design and multivariable statistics were judged to be particularly important topics, and well presented.

Plans are underway to survey course graduates to determine how they have made use of the materials in their current positions.

Implementation Lessons

- Offering the course every other year is necessary as the division has two first- and two second-year fellows (two receive the course in their first year of training and two in their second year).
- Information covered has had to be somewhat general, given the diverse backgrounds of the learners. For example, some have had biostatistics and methodology courses, while others have not.
- The course is now offered to research assistants employed through the Division of Geriatrics, to help improve the overall quality and quantity of divisional research products.

- One goal for the future is to have additional faculty from both within and outside of the Geriatrics Division teach sections of the course, as a way to introduce these faculty members to ongoing research activities within the Division, thus promoting interdisciplinary research activities.

Available Materials

Tools/Resources

- Course Syllabus

For More Information

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