
Introduction:

Innovations in Education at Mount Sinai

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THE ESTABLISHMENT of the Institute for Medical Education at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in 2001 led to a renewed emphasis on the important role education plays in the training of the next generation of physicians and the need to reward faculty whose careers focus on education. The mission of the Institute is to assist educators to develop careers of distinction and professional satisfaction. To further this mission, the Institute launched several new initiatives that recognized scholarship in medical education, rewarded curricular innovation, highlighted education at Mount Sinai and its affiliated hospitals, and embraced mentorship and professional development among the faculty.

To highlight the efforts of faculty in curricular innovation, the Institute sponsored the first Educational Research Day in October 2003. Fifty faculty members submitted a total of 55 projects. The papers in this special issue of the *Journal* were chosen from posters presented on that Educational Research Day. These papers exemplify the diversity of educational activities at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and its affiliated hospitals. They describe and analyze well-established educational programs, as well as new initiatives designed to improve the education of house staff and students.

The paper by Dr. Barry Stimmel describes the goals and objectives of the Mount Sinai Consortium for Graduate Medical Education, formed in 1996 and currently comprising 13 institutions and over 2,000 house staff. The Consortium's mission is to enhance and monitor the quality of house staff education across all specialties at participating hospitals. Dr. Stimmel describes the Consortium's educational programs and assessment activities and discusses some of its major accomplishments.

Drs. Rand David and Lawrence Reich created and evaluated a systems-based practice curriculum within the Primary Care Internal Medicine Residency program at Elmhurst Hospital Center, an affiliate of Mount Sinai Medical Center. In their article, they demonstrate that this curriculum, based on monthly small-group discussions focusing on systems-based practice, leads to an enhanced understanding of important topics in managed care. A greater awareness of the physician's role within the health care system enables the physician to offer optimal care to individual patients in a complex delivery system.

Another paper by Drs. Reich and David describes a competency-based assessment tool they developed for the Internal Medicine Residency program. This novel process focuses on outcomes of learning elements associated with the six core competencies of graduate medical education rather than on content and pedagogy. It allows for the assessment of both content and process-based features of each programmatic learning element together with its intended outcomes.

The paper by Drs. Lisa Bensinger, Yasmin Meah and Lawrence Smith reviews the importance of teaching skills curricula for residents, often referred to as Resident as Teacher (RAT) programs, their emergence over time, and their current status in graduate medical education. They also describe the Resident Teaching Development Program (RTDP), an expanding curriculum for all residents at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and its affiliates. This seven-hour, multi-disciplinary course was one of the first faculty development programs created by the Institute for Medical Education, in recognition of the critical role of residents as medical educators in our institution.

Marina Burke and Dr. Lawrence Smith describe a didactic and clinical curriculum, designed and implemented by four nurse practitioners in the Visiting Doctors Program at Mount Sinai, to provide home care exposure to third-year medical students. This program

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stresses a blend of medical, psychosocial and palliative aspects of patient care. Evaluation results indicated a high degree of acceptance on the part of the students of all aspects of the program, and suggest that nurse practitioners may be effective patient-centered-care role models for medical students.

The paper by Benjamin Kornitzer and Drs. Edward Ronan and Mary Rifkin presents the results of a study to determine whether the Summer Enrichment Program, a pre-matriculation program for selected students, eased their transition to medical school and enhanced their academic performance. The results show that this program, which previews four first-year medical school courses in a non-threatening, grade-free environment, has a positive impact on the enrolled students and plays an important role in improving the academic success of students who may not be optimally prepared for the rigors of medical school.

Suzanne Feigelson and Dr. David Muller created an elective, "Writing about Medicine," for medical students, in an effort to emphasize the role of

humanism in medicine. Using reading and writing as its primary tools, this elective was Mount Sinai's first effort to encourage students to remain connected to patient-centered health care. The paper reviews two similar programs at other medical schools (SUNY Stony Brook and Columbia University) and describes the Mount Sinai curriculum. Positive evaluations from students have allowed this elective to be offered to all classes in the medical school.

To illustrate the work of first-year students in the "Writing about Medicine" elective, we present samples of their thoughtful, provocative writing.

Taken together, the papers in this special issue reflect some of the curricular innovations that have been developed to improve both medical student and house staff education at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and its affiliates. As the Institute for Medical Education continues its mission to provide a home base for teachers and to support and enhance educational creativity and scholarship at Mount Sinai, we hope to issue periodic reports on our progress in the *Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine*.