FROM THE SOCIETY: PART II

SGIM Research on Careers (ROC) Interest Group: Origins, Evolution, and Future Work

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In 1988, at the request of their chair at Duke University, Mark Schwartz and Mark Linzer sat down to plan a study to investigate a decline in interest in careers in internal medicine. Thus was born the SGIM Career Choice Task Force. The study showed that the inpatient training environment was no longer producing interest in internal medicine careers. Several years later, SGIM President Mark Linzer asked the Career Choice Task Force to focus on physician job satisfaction. This led to the formation of the SGIM Career Satisfaction Study Group or CSSG. In 1995, the CSSG was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to perform the Physician Worklife Study. Elnora Rhodes was the project manager, and several investigators, including Martha Gerrity, Dawn Dewitt, Bob Konrad, and Eric Williams, among many others, joined the study group. The study produced job satisfaction measures and a better understanding of predictors of physician satisfaction, stress, and burnout.

In 2001, the CSSG was funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to assess the impact of work conditions on physicians and their patients. This study, titled MEMO (Minimizing Error Maximizing Outcome), brought in new investigators including Linda Baier Manwell, Anita Varkey, Said Ibrahim, Joseph Rabatin, Perry An, and many others. MEMO demonstrated relationships between work conditions and clinician outcomes and between work conditions and patient outcomes. MEMO also showed how work conditions predisposed to health disparities. While the MEMO study was in progress, the CSSG decided a name change was in order, given the expanded focus on careers. The Research on Careers (ROC) Interest Group became our name and mission.

For 10 consecutive years, investigators from the MEMO study, the Physician Worklife Study, and the current Healthy Work Place (HWP) study have been honored to host the ROC Interest Group at SGIM’s annual meetings. Over the years we have had the pleasure of getting to know new colleagues and watch their careers develop. This year honored us with another exciting meeting. While the group was small, the conversation was rich and rewarding. We had the opportunity to share the results of the HWP study, a recently concluded randomized control trial of worklife interventions. We also shared the excitement of a new AHRQ-funded study, MS squared (Minimizing Stress, Maximizing Success of the Electronic Medical Record), which will be conducted with colleagues at Stanford, Colorado (Centura Health), and the University of New Mexico. We were also delighted to hear about work currently being performed by ROC group colleagues, including women’s health education programs for VA physicians and nurses.

These conversations highlight the ways in which our work informs and overlaps with the work of others, and they could not happen in a more perfect environment for collaboration and collegiality than our national conference. Our area of research focus for almost 20 years has been provider satisfaction, stress, and burnout, and the meetings are a chance to reconnect with colleagues and share findings. These interest group meetings are a chance to share our work and passion and look for ways to work together.

Our future work will focus on challenges posed by the electronic medical record and on workflow redesign to improve the attractiveness of primary care careers. We are also excited to share the results of our new proposed partnerships with the Association of Chiefs and Leaders of General Internal Medicine and the American College of Physicians regarding physician worklife. For next year’s interest group meeting, bring your passion and interest in improving careers in general internal medicine. If you’ve always wanted to be in a ROC group, please join us!

References

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