

A Proposal for Building a Culture of Academic Family Medicine: The Tannenbaum Fellowship Program

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Abstract

Background: To be recognized as an academic discipline, family medicine should actively create, promote and consume relevant research. Unlike other specialties, family medicine developed in response to a broadly perceived lack of adequate primary care, before an active research base was established. As a result, many family physicians experience challenges with the role of research for the discipline and many researchers may not always understand the constraints and needs of the clinical context. To address this gap, we need initiatives that cross contextual boundaries.

Objectives: To describe a program where masters and doctoral students support first-year residents in their scholar training in Montreal, Canada.

Methods: An online training module was developed for first-year residents at nine teaching sites. Learning objectives were mapped to the CanMeds Scholar competencies (critical appraisal and quality improvement). The residents were required to present their work during education half day at the end of the first year. Graduate trainees (Tannenbaum Fellows) were recruited to support small groups of first-year residents. The postgraduate program director and research director met with the site education directors and Fellows twice a year.

Results: The program started in 2016/17 at two sites with three senior PhDs. Residents had the option to view online modules about scholarly activity that had been developed for clinician teachers who were planning to supervise resident research projects. That year, there was significant variation between sites in type and quality of activities. In 2017/18, 15 Fellows were attached to nine sites and use of the same online modules more strongly encouraged. In 2018/19, 18 Fellows were appointed and an entirely revamped 4-hour online training module on critical appraisal and quality improvement was made mandatory for all residents. As a result of this initiative, graduate students who served as Tannenbaum Fellows now better understand the clinical context and constraints for conducting

research in family medicine practice. The quality and consistency of the residents' presentations have also improved significantly.

Conclusions: Integrating trainees from the research and clinical context establishes important early connections, strengthening potential research capacity and relevance. The long-term impact on the academic discipline needs to be evaluated.