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Assessing geriatrics training in palliative care fellowships: a survey of program directors

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Keywords

Assessment of learning, Educational research findings, Educational research methods and models

Abstract

Purpose: Determine whether palliative care physician fellows receive training in geriatrics principles to equip them for taking care of seriously ill older adults.

Clear objectives: Assess the type, amount, and frequency of geriatrics training provided to physician fellows in ACGME palliative care fellowship programs via a survey of program directors.

Background, including two or more relevant citations:

The United States population is rapidly aging. The population age 65 and older increased from 39.6 million in 2009 to 54.1 million in 2019 (a 36% increase) and is projected to reach 94.7 million in 2060. The 85 and older population is projected to more than double from 6.6 million in 2019 to 14.4 million in 2040 (a 118% increase).¹ This aging population is more likely to experience multiple comorbidities that result in frailty, falls, dementia, and other geriatric syndromes. Palliative care is a specialty focused on symptom management and assessing goals of care for seriously ill adults, and will frequently see older adults, but has limited training and exposure in basic geriatrics training.² Not having adequate geriatrics training may make it more difficult for palliative care physicians to provide high quality care to older adults. Ideally, palliative care physicians would be equipped to identify geriatric syndromes, and have an awareness of adverse events from prescribing symptom management medications.

Methods and/or learning strategies: This project will ideally lead to the development of a survey that can be distributed to palliative care fellowship program directors through AAHPM. This survey will capture demographic information, identify areas learners receive geriatrics education and via what mechanism (clinical rotation, didactic, modules, etc) and barriers to providing geriatrics education.

Results and/or Impact: I anticipate the results will help provide the backbone to a needs assessment of the current state of geriatrics education in palliative care fellowships nationwide. My hope is this can be a starting point for assessing what the minimal education requirements should be, and determining how to better provide them in fellowship training programs. Future surveys could also examine fellow readiness, confidence, and interest in taking care of older adults in a palliative care setting.

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1. Recognize role of survey in needs assessment for education projects

References:

2020 Profile of Older Americans, Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, May 2021.

Gabbard, Jennifer, and Matthew McNabney. The Case for Dual Training in Geriatric Medicine and Palliative Care: The Time Is Now.â€ The American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Care 35, no. 2 (February 2018): 364â€70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049909117696251>.