Recruiting and Maintaining a Diverse Health Care Workforce

Statement of Problem

Minority physicians and scientists are vastly underrepresented among medical school faculty compared to general population percentages. Underrepresented minority (URM) faculty including Hispanic, Black, Native American, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander individuals comprise only 7.5% of all medical school faculty compared to 14.1% of medical students and 30.0% of the United States population. Although representation has increased over time, URM faculty are less likely to be promoted and when promoted, spend a longer time in a probationary rank. Overall, URM faculty are less likely to hold senior faculty positions and are less likely to receive National Institutes of Health (NIH) research awards. All of this leads to reports of social isolation, lower career satisfaction, and greater attrition than non-URM faculty.

A number of medical schools have implemented various faculty diversity programs to increase the recruitment and retention of URM faculty, however, little is known about the outcomes of such programs. A recent study by Guevara et al. and Adanga et al. show that minority faculty development programs are uncommon (29%) at US medical schools, and are not associated with URM recruitment, retention, or promotion.

Description

One exemplary faculty diversity program is the Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program (AMFDP) of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. AMFDP is structured as a four-year postdoctoral award, with the goal of increasing the number of faculty from historically disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve senior rank in academic medicine and who encourage and foster the development of succeeding classes of physicians. Since AMFDP's inception in 1983, there have been two evaluations of the program, one in 1995 and an updated evaluation in 2008.

This project aims to expand upon these previous evaluations by comparing scholarly productivity (grants and publications), promotions, and leadership attainment between scholars and applicants who were not selected but interviewed for the program.

AMFDP applicants who complete final interviews but are not eventually funded will be compared with AMFDP award recipients from 2003 to 2007 to determine:

1. Differences in scientific productivity between AMFDP applicants and awardees
2. Differences in the proportion of AMFDP applicants and awardees who attain a more senior academic rank or leadership position
3. Perceptions of mentoring, career development training, networking, and funding for scholarly activities by AMFDP applicants and awardees

AMFDP selects 10 to 25 scholars per year. This project will strive to interview these awardees and applicants.

Next Steps

This project will provide important information to evaluate the success of the current AMFDP program. Additionally, baseline information on applicants and award recipients will be gathered, which will permit longitudinal assessments of participants into the future. Information from this evaluation can be used to enhance existing program components of the AMFDP and to develop new program tools to enhance the success of AMFDP award recipients.

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