Introduction of a Resident-Faculty Mentorship Program: The Toronto-Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration in Emergency Medicine (TAAAC-EM)

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Background

TAAACEM is a collaborative partnership between Addis Ababa University (AAU) and the University of Toronto, working to develop, implement and support the first-ever postgraduate EM residency training program in Ethiopia.

In 2010, a need was identified to bridge gaps between in-country TAAAC-EM teaching trips by UofT EM faculty to maintain educational momentum and contact with AAU EM residents.

Introduction

Resident-faculty mentorship is a proven, valuable adjunct to residency medical education and has not previously been a formalized component of residency training at the Addis Ababa University School of Medicine (AAU SM).

With the establishment of a novel emergency medicine (EM) residency training program at Addis Ababa University in 2010, supported by the Toronto-Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration in Emergency Medicine (TAAACEM) partnership, a mentorship program was developed to encourage resident-faculty contact between teaching trips and to enhance the educational experience for Ethiopia’s first-ever EM trainees.

Methods

Each AAU PGY-1 EM resident was matched with a University of Toronto EM faculty who had participated in TAAACEM in-country teaching.

Mentors and mentees were encouraged to maintain regular email communication regarding:

1. Clinical questions
2. Career advice
3. Other matters of personal support

When possible, face to face ‘check-in’ meetings were also held.

Feedback was solicited regarding feedback and reflections on the mentorship program from both residents and staff physicians via email.

Results

22 residents and 12 EM faculty have participated in the mentorship program since 2010; 18 residents are currently being mentored; 8 residents and 6 EM faculty responded to the request for feedback about the mentorship program.

Overall, residents reported a positive mentorship experience, particularly feeling able to discuss the management of medical and ethical challenges they encountered during their training:

“I believe it is very important to us...because we are just beginning and we have many challenges... The relations have to be improved like internet access...skype discussions etc...”

Faculty feedback was also positive overall, with the maintenance of regular electronic contact at times limited by intermittent resident internet access:

“[This is a] good program to bridge the residents with actual practicing emergency physicians, even if not in their setting — there are no EPs in Ethiopia to match the residents with so it’s a necessity”

“I wonder about the utility given the distance challenge versus mentors closer to home”

Challenges identified by both groups included:

1. maintaining continuity of the mentor/mentee relationship online
2. accessing a reliable internet connection

Discussion

Based on preliminary feedback, the resident-faculty mentorship program has been a mutually beneficial addition to the AAU EM residency program for both mentors and mentees.

Future steps include the introduction of ‘mentor-mentee guidelines’ to encourage increased bi-directional communication.

Formal mentorship program evaluation is planned for 2015.

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