



From the Association of Family Practice
Residency Directors

TEACHING TOMORROW'S LEADERS TODAY

The Association of Family Practice Residency Directors (AFPRD) is a proud sponsor of the *Annals of Family Medicine*. The AFPRD's mission is to promote excellence in family practice graduate education in order to meet the health care needs of America. The *Annals of Family Medicine* is a much needed and welcomed publication that will provide the research and evidence we need to fulfill our mission.

As this year's AFPRD President, I have chosen the theme, Teaching Tomorrow's Leaders, Today. Our residency programs have the important responsibility of creating the learning environment from which the future leaders of family medicine will emerge. Ideally, in this environment residents would learn because they want to, not because they are forced to, and the whole organization is designed to facilitate the learning process. In this environment, learning should be a team effort, including the faculty and staff as well as the residents. In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge calls this kind of environment a learning organization. Senge defines a learning organization as "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future." He goes on to say that while survival is necessary, it is not sufficient for a learning organization. He sees learning as an inherently creative process, making the hallmark of a learning organization one "that enhances our capacity to create."¹

One of the most creative expressions of learning is research. However, engaging residents in research is among the toughest challenges we face as directors. It is becoming increasingly important that we meet this challenge, because doing research is one of the best ways to teach the new Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) competency of practice-based learning and improvement. The ACGME defines this competency as follows: "Residents must be able to investigate and evaluate their patient care practices, appraise and assimilate scientific evidence, and improve their patient care practices."² The *Annals of Family Medicine* was created to publish research that facilitates practice-based learning and is the best journal to help teach this competency.

To stimulate residency programs to develop their research curriculum and ultimately contribute to the *Annals*, we hope to highlight residencies that have developed successful research programs in future issues

of the *Annals*. In this way, we can all learn from each other in our quest to develop and become learning organizations.

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Association of Family Practice Residency Directors

References

1. Senge P. *The Fifth Discipline*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday; 1990:14.
2. Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. ACGME Outcome Project. Available at: <http://www.acgme.org/outcome>. Accessed June 14, 2003.



From the American Academy
of Family Physicians

IMPROVING CARE, ONE STUDY AT A TIME

The AAFP is front and center when it comes to research to improve patient care, thanks in part to the efforts of its National Network for Family Practice and Primary Care Research.

The mission of the network is to discover better ways of caring for patients, and its research projects actively seek answers to the problems that confront primary care physicians. Currently, several studies are in various stages of development in its research pipeline.

"Infrastructure funding from the Academy for the research network has been critical to the network's early successes," says John Hickner, MD, MS, network director.

The AAFP Board of Directors approved the plan for the network 4 years ago. Since then, the network has published the results of 2 studies, the first on patient safety and the other on the bioterrorism preparedness of family physicians. Several more manuscripts are near completion.

Be it through the study of pneumococcal immunizations in older adults or the assessment of treatment barriers for hepatitis C, the Academy is actively seeking answers to the problems that confront physicians in their practices. "Simply put, the AAFP recognizes the importance of research in primary care settings," says Hickner. He has overseen many of these projects, including the first 2 described below.

Here is an overview of current projects:

Pneumococcal Immunizations Among Older Adults. Data collection began in August 2002 for this 2-pronged study. The first goal of the study is to compare the use of handheld computers with traditional