Enhancing Collaborative Networks

We aim to build upon and strengthen our partnerships with international health organizations, health care practitioners, policy makers, and communities to promote social participation as a cornerstone of health system development.

Global problems need global teamwork. NAPCRG's partnerships with international health organizations, policy makers, and communities are crucial for advancing social participation in health. By working together, we share ideas, learn from each other, and find innovative solutions to common challenges. By embracing the principles outlined in the WHO resolution, NAPCRG is committed to contributing to the global movement towards health systems that are inclusive, participatory, and respond to the needs of all people.

T.C. (Tim) olde Hartman, MD, GP/FP, PhD and Tom Vansaghi, PhD



From the Association of Departments of Family Medicine

Ann Fam Med 2025;23:175-176. https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.250096

ADDRESSING RESEARCH PATHWAY GAPS: INSIGHTS FROM A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AT THE AAFP FUTURE CONFERENCE

The pursuit of a career in family medicine presents medical students and residents with a myriad of opportunities for professional development. One such avenue is to incorporate

research into their careers, a road that can not only sharpen critical thinking but also enrich clinical practice.1-2 The journey into research can often appear daunting, however, characterized by perceived barriers such as lack of mentorship and protected time, unclear pathways, inadequate resources, and insufficient practical guidance. 3-6 In response to these challenges, and in service of the new National Strategic Plan for Family Medicine Research which targets addressing some of these barriers, our team conducted a needs assessment survey at the 2024 AAFP FUTURE Conference which is focused on and attended by medical students interested in residency training in family medicine. This survey was comprised of 6 questions focusing on the role of research within medical education and career advancement in family medicine (questionnaire available on request).7

Survey Results: Quantitative Insights Into Research Interests and Needs

The needs assessment survey collected responses from 62 medical students from across the United States and abroad. The online survey was distributed by way of a QR code introduced at the conference by a faculty member to participants selected by convenience. Here are the key findings:

First Impressions of Research are Diverse

When asked about their first word association with "research," responses varied widely, with "Lab," "Data," "Innovation," and "Publications" being among the most common (Figure 1). However, terms like "Hard," "Intimidating," "Stress," and "Difficult" also featured prominently, indicating mixed perceptions and potential apprehension about engaging in research.

Interest in Research Careers is Substantial

A full one-third of respondents (34.4%, n = 21) expressed definite interest in pursuing research as part of their future career. Another one-half (52.5%, n = 32) remained unsure and 13.1% (n = 8) were uninterested, indicating a need to address the barriers and misconceptions that may be influencing these perspectives.

Awareness of ACGME Scholarship Requirements is Low

It is common for medical students to be unaware of the ACGME scholarship requirements during their early training, as reflected by 77.4% of respondents (n = 48) who indicated a lack of awareness. This finding presents an opportunity to introduce educational initiatives designed to familiarize students with the broad array of scholarly activities recognized by ACGME, such as original research, evidence synthesis, quality improvement projects, and educational material

Figure 1. Word Cloud Representation of Survey Responses



This word cloud visualizes the most frequently mentioned words from participant responses to "What is the first word that pops into your head when hearing the word research?" (61 respondents providing 67 words), with the size of each word reflecting its frequency of occurrence. Larger words indicate a higher frequency, capturing key themes and perceptions associated with the concept of research among survey participants.



development. Understanding these requirements could better equip incoming residents to choose programs offering strong support and resources for conducting meaningful research and could provide programs with a shared foundation from which to develop and enhance their scholarly initiatives. Emphasizing the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and dissemination of findings in various venues, as advocated by ACGME, can also enhance students' preparedness for engaging in impactful scholarship during their residencies.

Interest in Research-Related CV Building is Very High The vast majority of respondents (90.3%, n = 56) showed

The vast majority of respondents (90.3%, n = 56) showed a strong interest in learning how to build their resumes through research experiences, recognizing the potential impact on their competitiveness for residency placements.

Willingness to Attend a Research Pathways Workshop and Preferences for Workshop Content is Substantial

The interest in educational interventions was underscored by the fact that 77.4% of respondents (n = 48) indicated they would attend a workshop focused on advancing their careers in family medicine through research. This demonstrates an appetite for structured learning opportunities to better understand research pathways. The survey's open-ended responses revealed several key preferences for workshop content among participants such as guidance on effectively managing their time and identifying resources to support their research endeavors. They sought information on clinical research pathways and the importance of establishing mentorship relationships. Participants emphasized the desire to receive practical, accessible guidance, particularly for those who are new to research or have a primarily clinical focus. Additionally, there was interest in exploring specific areas such as health services research, clinical trials, and strategies for balancing clinical responsibilities with research activities.

Implications for Research Education in Medical Training

The findings from our needs assessment illuminate possible opportunities for enhancing research education within medical school curricula and residency programs. By addressing the gaps identified, we can equip students with the competence and confidence needed to actively engage in research and leverage it for career advancement. Potential strategies include:

Curricular Reforms

Integrating structured research education within medical school curricula can lay a strong foundation for future family medicine physicians. Educators could provide a more comprehensive understanding of research methodologies, potential career pathways, and the real-world applications of research than is currently common.

Mentorship and Research Pathway Guidance Programs

Creating formalized mentorship networks with established research teams would provide learners with hands-on guidance, helping them navigate the challenges of initiating and maintaining research projects. Experienced mentors could play a pivotal role in demystifying research processes, from developing research questions to achieving publication.

Develop Workshops and Interactive Sessions

Workshops can serve as pivotal platforms where interested learners gain practical insights and skills related to research. Through interactive sessions, medical students and residents can learn about study design, data analysis, and dissemination of findings, making the research process more accessible and less daunting.

Conclusion: Engaging the Next Generation of Researchers in Family Medicine

The insights from the survey suggest a strong latent interest in research among medical students interested in family medicine, though it is tempered by a lack of knowledge and clear pathways. Enhancing research education and providing tangible experiences may empower the next generation of family medicine physicians. By investing in robust research training and mentorship—a process the discipline has begun through the new strategic plan for research—we can ensure these trainees are well-prepared to contribute significantly to the evolution of family medicine, ultimately improving health care outcomes and building our own evidence base for primary care practice.

Nicole L. Gentile, MD, PhD, Amanda Weidner, MPH, Ian Bennett, MD, PhD, Samantha Elwood, BA

References

- 1. Arora V, Bell PF, Hagberg S. Cultivating change: engaging residents in research. *Int J Psychiatry Med.* 2020;55(5):376-383. doi: 0.1177/0091217420 951030
- 2. Gotler RS. Unfinished business: the role of research in family medicine. *Ann Fam Med.* 2019;17(1):70-76. doi:10.1370/afm.2323
- Nair SC, Ibrahim H, Almarzoqi F, Alkhemeiri A, Sreedharan J. Addressing research barriers and facilitators in medical residency. J Family Med Prim Care. 2019;8(3):1145-1150. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_38_19
- Gill S, Levin A, Djurdjev O, Yoshida EM. Obstacles to residents' conducting research and predictors of publication. Acad Med. 2001;76(5):477. doi: 10.1097/00001888-200105000-00021
- Ringwald BA, Taylor M, Seehusen DA, Middleton JL. Family medicine resident scholarly activity infrastructure, output, and dissemination: a CERA survey. Ann Fam Med. 2024;22(5):400-409. doi:10.1370/afm.3160
- Mokhtari B, Badalzadeh R, Ghaffarifar S. The next generation of physicianresearchers: undergraduate medical students' and residents' attitudes, challenges, and approaches towards addressing them. BMC Med Educ. 2024;24(1): 1313. doi:10.1186/s12909-024-06166-8
- Weidner A, Asif I. Shaping the future of family medicine research: the 2023 national family medicine research summit. Ann Fam Med. 2024;22(1):72-74. doi: 10.1370/afm.3086