

Engaging Medical Students in Research through Student Research Mentorship Programme

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Abstract : As one of the two Academic Medical Centres (AMCs) in Singapore, SingHealth Duke-NUS AMC strives to improve patients' lives through excellent clinical care, research and education. These efforts are enhanced with the establishment of Academic Clinical Programmes (ACPs). Each ACP brings together specialists in a particular discipline from different institutions to maximize the power of shared knowledge and resources. Initiated by Surgery ACP, the student research mentorship programme is a programme designed to facilitate engagement between medical students and the surgical faculty. The programme offers mentors not only the opportunity to supervise research but also to nurture future clinician scientists. In turn, medical students acquire valuable research experience which may be useful in their future careers. The programme typically lasts one year, depending on the students' commitment. Surgery ACP matches students' research interests with the mentor's area of expertise whenever possible. Surgery ACP organizes informal tea sessions to bring students and prospective mentors together. Once a match is made, the pair is required to submit a project proposal which includes the title, proposed start and end dates, ethical and biosafety considerations and project details. The mentees either think of their own research question with guidance from the mentors or join an existing project. The mentees may participate in data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing and conference presentation. The progress of each research project is monitored through half-yearly progress report. The mentees report problems encountered or changes made to existing proposal on top of the progress made. A total of 18 mentors were successfully paired with 36 mentees since 2013. Currently, there are 23 on-going and 13 completed projects. The mentees are encouraged to present their projects at conferences and to publish in peer-reviewed journals. Six mentees have presented their completed projects at local or international conferences and one mentee has her work published. To further support student research, Surgery ACP organized a Research Day in 2015 to recognize their research efforts and to showcase their wide-range of research. Surgery ACP recognizes that early exposure of medical students to research is important in developing them into clinician scientists. As interest in research take time to develop and are usually realized during various research attachments, it is crucial that programmes such as the student research mentorship programme exist. Surgery ACP will continue to build on this programme.

Keywords : academic clinical programme, clinician scientist, medical student, mentoring

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