The NJISA Fellowship Newsletter

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GERIATRIC FELLOWSHIP SPOTS AVAILABLE

- Geriatric medicine, psychiatry, and dentistry fellowship positions available to start July 1, 2011
- One- and two-year programs
- Competitive training stipends, benefits, 4 weeks of vacation
- Contact Susan Huff for more info, 856-566-6124; huffsrm@umdnj.edu; or visit http://njisa.umdnj.edu/education/fellowship/index.htm

The Geriatric Advantage

Patients aged 65 and older represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, and this trend is not anticipated to slow anytime soon. In fact, the first of the baby boomer generation will reach the age of 65 by 2011, with the population growing to more than 70 million by the year 2030! However, according to a 2009 report by Academic Medicine, there are “[s]ignificant gaps in the quality of care for older adults.” The Institute of Medicine’s “Retooling for an Aging America” report echoes the above finding, indicating that America is headed for an actual health crisis unless the number of physicians knowledgeable in geriatric care increases drastically.

The need for geriatric physicians can only mean there is, and will continue to be, a significant increase in job opportunities in the field of geriatrics. In 2007, the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society (JAGS) reported an average of 9.6 full-time geriatric physician faculty members at US medical schools, up from the previously reported average of 7.5 in 2001. JAGS also reported in 2008 that the number of ACGME geriatric fellowship programs in the US totaled 145 in 2008-2009, an increase of 25 programs from 2001-2002. What’s more, the recent developments in health care reform have opened up prospects for different models of care, translating to greater options for geriatricians.

Certainly, one can see that the demand for trained geriatricians is present, but there are other contributory factors that establish geriatrics as one of the most enticing and stimulating specialties in medicine. Geriatrics allows physicians to push their boundaries and explore uncharted areas of medicine; this is especially true as patient longevity increases through new technology and research efforts and patients live longer and thus more successfully with multiple chronic diseases. With the many comorbid conditions and the physiologic changes that occur with aging, treating the elderly patient can be challenging, but is always rewarding. Further, achieving expertise in a specific medical focus can help put oneself ahead of the pack. It is a way to be set apart from the general practitioners and make one’s practice more attractive.

In a 2002 Archives of Internal Medicine survey, geriatricians reported the highest job satisfaction levels of any specialty. Years later, this finding still rings true. In a 2009 survey of over 6,000 clinicians, BioMed Central found that geriatrics still offers an extremely high level of job satisfaction. With their specialized knowledge and the nature of geriatric care, geriatricians are able to establish a special rapport and long-term relationships with their patients. Geriatric physicians promote quality of care across the continuum, from the acute to the ambulatory setting and all the way through to end-of-life care. They also have opportunities to gain clinical and academic leadership positions, Medical Directorships, and become consultants. Specialized training in geriatrics will not only offer high job satisfaction, but also allow physicians to provide better, more effective care for their patients and offer greater career opportunities.

Stephanie Pelullo, MPA
NJISA Receives HRSA Funding for Interdisciplinary Geriatric Fellowship Program!

The NJISA proudly acknowledges receiving funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to continue its long-standing geriatrics fellowship training program. One of only thirteen awardees nationwide and the only osteopathic school to be funded, UMDNJ-SOM, NJISA offers a unique interdisciplinary geriatrics fellowship program to internists, family physicians, psychiatrists, and dentists.

Other awardees include Johns Hopkins University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California-Los Angeles, and Duke University. This 5-year grant allows the NJISA’s fellowship program to continue its tradition of excellence in clinical care, education, and research at UMDNJ-SOM, a school that has been ranked among the top 20 schools for geriatric medicine by U.S. News & World Report for over a decade.

The four key components of the fellowship training program are clinical care; research; teaching; and administration. Clinically, fellows increase their understanding of the many myriad ways that older adults differ as patients from the younger population. With the guidance of research and clinical experts, fellows develop their own research hypotheses and see the project through submission to the IRB to presentation at a regional geriatric society research night. Fellows learn educational theory and techniques and apply these skills to a variety of audiences through formal teaching and bedside instruction. Fellows also gain administrative experience: they run meetings, participate on committees, and learn practice management techniques.

For more information about the fellowship, please visit the website: http://njisa.umdnj.edu/education/fellowship/index.htm

A Message from the Fellowship Directors...

Why did you choose geriatrics?

“One of my reasons for going into dentistry is that I wanted to make a difference. So the fact that there were a limited number of geriatric trained dentists attracted me to the fellowship.”

-Jill York, DDS, MAS
Director of the Geriatric Dentistry Fellowship Program

“I chose geriatrics because I found this subspecialty of medicine complex and challenging. I also find the aging population very rewarding.”

-Terrie Ginsberg, DO, FACOI
Director of the Geriatric Internal Medicine Fellowship Program

“The field of geriatrics chose me – a profession in which the patient-physician relationship is at the heart of everything we do.”

-Kevin Overbeck, DO
Director of the Geriatric Family Medicine Fellowship Program

“I had a great relationship with my grandparents, and I find making a difference in older people’s lives every day incredibly rewarding.”

-Stephen M. Scheinthal, DO, FACP
Director of the Geriatric Psychiatry Fellowship Program
Why Specialize in Geriatrics?

The Tale of a Former Fellow

In 1990, I joined the second class of Geriatrics Fellows at the Center for Aging, now the New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging (NJISA), UMDNJ-SOM, and, in the next two decades since, many other fellows have followed me in the program. I was attracted to the fellowship because it offered the opportunity to set myself apart and contribute something beyond what a general internist in private practice could do. I was also interested in how osteopathic medicine could provide something unique to the wider biomedical community. How could OMT be used to help the elderly? Can heart failure or pneumonia really be treated with osteopathic manipulation? If so, then how would OMT fit into current medical care?

As part of the fellowship program, we had to design and complete a research project. I did a small project testing the efficacy of OMT in the elderly hospitalized with pneumonia. Given the small sample size, we assumed the results may be negative but still provide a good learning exercise. However, the results were encouraging, suggesting a beneficial effect. This project led to a larger single-site study, then the Multicenter Osteopathic Pneumonia Study in the Elderly (MOPSE). This fall I had the pleasure of presenting the primary outcome results of MOPSE at the 2010 OstMed convention in San Francisco. The opportunity and skills to do these projects and others came from what I learned during my fellowship position with UMDNJ-SOM.

I also learned that I enjoyed the process of discovery, of finding something never before known that could lead to better care for many people. Choosing to focus on geriatrics has been rewarding, as I enjoy interacting with seniors, listening and sorting out complex health issues. If you listen long enough, patients will tell you what the problem is. The specialty of geriatric medicine (across both the allopathic and osteopathic professions) is inherently more holistic and friendly towards osteopathic principles, relative to other specialties in health care. Geriatricians rarely focus on just one organ system. They manage persons with multiple medical problems, deal with atypical disease presentations, consider functional status and offer counsel. In short, geriatrics is inherently a more holistic specialty.

But why is osteopathic research in the elderly important? Certainly, the elderly are a unique and vulnerable population that has much to gain from any advancement in health care. There are many potential applications of OMT in the elderly which may prove beneficial, but remain unexplored by quality clinical or basic science research. Since returning to the NJISA in the spring of 2010, one of my primary goals has been to mentor and help develop the next generation of geriatricians who will explore, through research and scholarly activity, the full potential of osteopathic medicine and research to help seniors age successfully. I do believe the future of the profession depends upon our ability to build a stronger evidence-based foundation and a solid base in osteopathic geriatric medicine.

Donald R. Noll, DO, FACOI
The NJISA Fellows’ Year-End Review

The mission of the New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging (NJISA) is to promote successful aging and improve the quality of life of older adults and their families. The institute includes physicians, psychiatrists, dentists, nurses and behavioral health professionals who provide quality clinical geriatric care, teach other health care professionals and students, and demonstrate leadership in aging research. Trained faculty and staff also provide community education on successful aging and advocate for seniors on health care policy issues and standards, as the NJISA continues to be a pioneer in the field of geriatrics.

Each year, the NJISA is proud to recognize the many notable accomplishments of its former and current geriatric fellows. Once again it has been a remarkable year for the program, citing many personal and professional achievements among the fellows, past and present.

- Wayne Carlsen, DO (Class of ’91, Geriatric Internal Medicine), was appointed Assistant Dean of Clinical Education at Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Athens, Ohio, May, 2010.
- Donald Noll, DO, FACOI (Class of ’90, Geriatric Internal Medicine) returned to the institute and was appointed to the role of Associate Professor of Medicine in March, 2010. Dr. Noll plays an integral part in the advancement of OMT Research, clinical practice, and undergraduate and graduate medical education in the NJISA.
- Kevin Overbeck, DO (Class of ’06, Geriatric Family Medicine) was confirmed by the ACOFP as the NJISA’s Geriatrics-Family Medicine Fellowship Program Director in March, 2010; he had been acting program director since November, 2009.
- Congratulations to the NJISA’s Fellowship Class of 2010: Hima Bindu Parchuri, DO (Geriatric Family Medicine). At this year’s fellowship commencement dinner, Dr. Parchuri received the 2010 Excellence in Teaching in Geriatrics and Gerontology award. Upon graduation, she joined a private practice in Southern New Jersey.
- Martin DeSantis, DO, NJISA Geriatric Psychiatry Fellow, began the fellowship program in July 2010, and will graduate with the Class of 2012.
- Congratulations to James Lin, DO (Class of ’08, Geriatric Internal Medicine) and his wife, Emma, who proudly welcomed their first child, James Henry Lin, on April 12, 2010.

Have you heard about the recent triumph of a former fellow that is not listed here? Let us know, and we will include it in the next issue! The NJISA wishes to stay connected with all its past fellows.

Dr. Parchuri accepting her “Excellence in Teaching in Geriatrics and Gerontology” award from Dr. Pamela Basehore, Associate Director for Education, NJISA.