

Health Professions Education Institute (HPEI)

Title: Certificate Program for Early Exposure to Surgical Subspecialties

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CURRICULAR INNOVATIONS

Problem/Needs Assessment:

Preclinical medical students have limited exposure to surgical specialties. While interest groups may host one-time events like suturing workshops, there is no formalized program providing both didactic and clinical introduction to surgical fields. With increasing competition for surgical fields, advantage is conferred on applicants who begin developing their surgical CV in preclinical years.

Program Objectives:

The Objective of the Surgical Subspecialties Certificate Program is to provide lecture, simulation, and clinically based learning to preclinical medical students to aid them in 1) defining their interest in surgery and 2) connecting them with resident and faculty mentorship in specialties of interest.

Description of Program:

A medical student facilitator and Plastic Surgery Resident developed and administered the certificate with the Plastic Surgery Residency Program Director serving as a faculty mentor. An application was sent to all first year medical students at Wake Forest School of Medicine via RedCap. Applications were blinded and 8 students (4 women, 4 men) were selected. Students in the program were required to attend class sessions, observe surgical cases, shadow a resident on call, and attend a surgery department grand rounds. To facilitate access to clinical settings, students were paired with two resident mentors from different surgical specialties. A total of 8 class sessions were conducted over 4 months during Fall 2021.

Evaluation/Assessment:

A Kanevsky methodology based Post-Pre Survey was administered at the program's final class session. Following completion of the certificate program, all but one student had a change in their level of interest in surgery from before the program to after. Students reported increased comfort with the operating room setting and had developed meaningful relationships with surgical residents and faculty. Participants attended an average of 6.0 (± 1.8) surgical cases, and met with their resident mentors 3.8 (± 1.1) times.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned:

A formalized program for exposing preclinical students to surgical specialties is effective for helping students define their interest in surgery and connect with surgical mentors.