

ACADEMIC RESIDENT

News and Information for Residents Interested in Academic Emergency Medicine

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Ways To Get the Most Out of Your Residency

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As you have learned by now, emergency medicine residency training is an extremely busy time. There are many competing interests for your time, including your family, residency, and outside interests. The goal of this article is not so much to give advice on time management, as it is on successful strategies to maximize the training you are receiving.

When you embarked on a career path in emergency medicine, you carefully chose the residencies you applied to and interviewed at, as well as your ultimate rank list. As you consider how to maximize the training and education you receive, remember the qualities of the residency that you are at, and why you chose that particular residency program. Ultimately, the strengths of that program will help guide you through your residency training. The components of emergency medicine residency training can be broken down into:

- Clinical Care
- Academics
- EMS
- Research
- Political interest/involvement
- Camaraderie
- Rest/wellness

Before each of these components are discussed, try to envision the kind of emergency physician that you want to be. Will you be a purely clinical emergency physician? Do you envision research or academic pursuits to be a component of your practice? How will EMS fit in? Do you have any interest in furthering the cause of emergency medicine as a specialty and the care of our patients through political involvement? Consider these questions in the context of five years after residency. The answers to these questions will help focus you into the areas you will be involved with in your career.

As each of these components is discussed, consider developing a mentoring relationship with one of the attending physicians at your program. Mentors are an extremely valuable way to further develop your knowledge in specific areas, develop modeling behaviors, and develop collegial relationships with others in your interest areas. Many residencies have mentoring relationships formalized within their program. Take advantage of this! If your program does not, try to identify an attending with whom you would like to develop a mentoring relationship. If you are undecided as to an area of emergency medicine in which to focus, consider a mentor who provides an excellent example of patient care and communication.

Clinical Care

In order to be successful in emergency medicine, the cornerstone is providing excellent care of patients. Whether you go into an academic environment, focus on EMS, research, or other areas, your success and reputation will be signifi-

cantly affected by the quality of care you provide to your patients. There are several strategies that can be used to maximize this education. Be aggressive in seeing patients in the emergency department. For those patient illnesses/injuries that you do not have a good handle on, make it a point to read about that illness/injury. There is nothing like reading about a disease or injury, and comparing it to the presentation of a patient you have recently taken care of, to emphasize learning points and help with retention.

On off-service rotations, be interested in that service. Your residency program has determined that a particular rotation is worthwhile for a number of reasons—RRC-EM requirements, the quality of the rotation, etc. Take advantage of what the rotation has to offer. As an example, when you are on an orthopedic rotation, observe or assist in the surgeries for hip fractures. Being able to explain the type of surgery that a patient is likely to have based on type of hip fracture can be very helpful to the patient and their family. Each off-service rotation has many things to offer, and they should be taken advantage of.

During your residency, try different methods of the same procedure. Residency training is a protected environment in which you have higher level residents and attending staff standing by to help. If you have only intubated with a Macintosh curved blade, for the next intubation, try using a Miller straight blade. The next time that you put in a chest tube, if there is time, consider an intercostal nerve block for pain control. The point is that you will be less apt to try new things once you graduate, and arguably the place to try new procedures and methods is during your formal residency training.

Academics

To summarize, read, read, and read! Each rotation has readings assigned to it. Try to keep up with the assigned readings. Reading is one of the first things that is sacrificed as the demands on time increase, such as during difficult rotations. However, make reading a priority. Try to set aside time every day for some amount of reading. Everyone has a calendar that they put their scheduled shifts on. On that same calendar put down reading times, and even what you want to read. This will force you to recognize the importance of reading. Scheduling reading times ahead of time makes it a priority.

Conferences should always be attended. Prior to each conference, look at the conference topics. If possible, read about the topic, and find an article directly related to that conference topic. Just like reading about a disease/injury after having seen a patient with it, there is better retention of a topic if some preparation occurs prior to listening to the lecture.

If your career interests lie in academic emergency medicine, make sure that you develop a mentoring relationship with your program director or other individual involved in the academics of your residency program.

EMS

EMS is an area of emergency medicine that we can claim as our own. In some emergency departments, EMS will be responsible for nearly 50% of the patients seen. It is important to develop a thorough grounding in the components of EMS, including medical direction, protocol development, Medical Director duties, etc. If you are really interested in EMS, consider taking a medical directors' course.

Many graduates of emergency medicine residency programs find that they are assigned to an EMS squad at the hospital in which they end up working at. The knowledge gained during residency will serve you well in this role.

Research

The RRC-EM requires that every resident "participate in the development of new knowledge, learn to evaluate research findings, and develop habits of inquiry as a continuing professional responsibility." Most residency programs require a research project of some kind. Try to become involved in a project that fits with your long-term goals as well as the program's. As an example, if you have a strong interest in EMS, consider a research project with the EMS director. If you have a desire to pursue research following residency training, it is essential that you develop a mentoring relationship with a faculty member who is involved with research, and who can shepherd you through this academic development.

Political Interest/Involvement

There are many opportunities for involvement in organized emergency medicine. This pursuit will benefit you by learning that there is a lot of energy and effort that is occurring behind the scenes. All emergency physicians and all emergency patients benefit from this activism. In order to see this activism, you must at the least attend a state chapter meeting, or a national meeting of one of the major organizations. EMRA has significant influence in residency training as well as patient care. In addition, there are many important opportunities for residents in SAEM, ACEP, AAEM, etc.

Camaraderie

Some of the most successful graduating classes as a whole have the most camaraderie. Characteristics of these classes include meeting away from the hospital, doing things recreationally, and involving significant others with other

residents/significant others. This camaraderie results in helping each other out, including during times of personal illness or family emergency. The result is less stress during your residency training.

Wellness

Speaking of stress during residency, wellness is an issue that every program director is concerned about. If you are having problems during residency that are affecting your well-being, approach your program director or mentor and let them know. Use the camaraderie of your class to help you through any rough times, including difficult rotations. Get your sleep. Schedule time with your friends and family. Talk to others who know your area and surprise your significant other on that rare day off with a trip to a local attraction.

Finally, from a Program Director's Perspective

Every program has requirements in each of the above areas. Understand that you will be measured as a resident at least partially by how well you complete your residency requirements. Make your life easier—complete the requirements! Document your procedures, resuscitations, and patient follow-ups. Prepare your assigned lectures. Complete your program's EMS requirements. If you are responsible for completion of your rotation evaluations, complete them! Do your readings.

Summary

There is a tremendous amount of time, energy, and effort that must be expended during residency training. Know your program's requirements, and be diligent in completing them. Keep in mind your overall goal of the type of emergency physician you want to be five years after residency completion. Use the resources of your residency to help you achieve that goal.