



Fahad Aziz, MD, FASN

Thriving in Your First Year of Medical Training

Fahad Aziz, MD, FASN; *WMJ* Editor-in-Chief

July is a pivotal month in academic medical centers, marking significant transitions across various stages of medical careers—from medical students stepping up to residency, residents advancing to fellowships, and fellows rising to the roles of attending physicians. The transition from medical student to resident is particularly critical as it represents a shift from classroom learning to active patient care—a change that is both exhilarating and challenging.

This editorial aims to help new residents transition smoothly from the structured world of medical school to the fast-paced clinical practice. It offers guidance on crucial skills like communication, problem-solving, and adaptability to ensure success in this new environment and provides strategies and insights to bridge the gap between theory and real-world.

Learning the Culture of the Medical Center

Understanding and embracing the culture of a medical center is a cornerstone of success for new residents. By immersing themselves in the medical center's core values, practices, and

...

Author Affiliations: Dr Aziz is *WMJ* editor in chief; associate professor, Department of Medicine, and director, Nephrology Fellowship Program, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (UWSMPH), Madison, Wisconsin.

expectations, residents expedite their adaptation and foster fruitful collaborations with their peers. This entails honoring established protocols, engaging in team dynamics, and aligning with the institution's distinctive patient care phi-

care begins with a commitment to continuous learning, including immersing themselves in the latest research, treatments, and techniques available through medical journals, online platforms, workshops, and conferences. Embracing

Focusing on cultural assimilation, continuous learning, compassionate care, openness to feedback, strong mentorship, resilience, time management, and celebrating small victories will prepare residents to succeed.

losophy. Through proactive cultural adaptation, new residents can deftly navigate the basics of their work environment, fortify professional bonds, and make meaningful contributions to the team. This dedication catalyzes personal development and cultivates a robust professional support system that is pivotal for a thriving residency and future career progression.

Commitment to Lifelong Learning and Compassionate Care

“Medicine is a science of uncertainty and an art of probability.” These famous words of Sir William Osler echo through time, reminding us that medicine is a blend of science and art, where uncertainty meets probability. For new residents, the path to excellence in patient

the journey of lifelong learning not only hones their skills but also fortifies their confidence, empowering them to deliver exceptional patient care.

Embracing the significance of compassionate care is also paramount. Rooted in Latin, the term compassion signifies “together suffering” or “fellow in feelings.” Scientists characterize compassion as the profound ability to empathize with others' pain and a genuine eagerness to assist. Delivering compassionate care elevates patient interactions and forges a robust bond between caregivers and patients. In their groundbreaking book, *Wonder Drug: 7 Scientifically Proven Ways That Serving Others Is the Best Medicine for Yourself*, renowned physician-scientists Stephen Trzeciak and

Anthony Mazzarelli underscore the indispensable nature of compassionate care in health-care, noting that it serves as a shield against burnout and offers a wellspring of joy and achievement. “By serving others, you gain immeasurably. Giving is a potent remedy for all givers,” writes Trzeciak.¹ Nurturing a passion for patient care early in a medical career yields professional contentment and enriches life with profound purpose.²⁻⁴

Seek Feedback

Feedback, a dynamic process that involves both giving and receiving, is an essential element of the educational process that helps trainees reach their maximum potential. For new residents, feedback is crucial for promoting learning and meeting professional standards. It aids in identifying areas for improvement and celebrating achievements, facilitating continuous professional growth. Learning to receive feedback properly helps residents progress from where they are to where they aspire, and seeking feedback from peers, senior residents, nurses, and attendings is equally important. When residents embrace feedback with humility and a willingness to grow, it enhances patient care, team unity, and the health care system's resilience. This openness reflects a dedication to personal and professional development, emphasizing that feedback is not just a formality but a vital aspect of clinical skills and leadership. By exemplifying adequate feedback reception, residents underline the significance of feedback in attaining clinical excellence and strong leadership.⁵

Finding Mentors

In Oprah Winfrey's words, “A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.” In the medical field, mentorship is another cornerstone of personal and professional development—particularly for interns and residents. A mentor provides crucial guidance, drawing on years of experience to illuminate the intricate landscape of medical practice.

Establishing a solid mentorship connection yields numerous benefits. It fosters a supportive and nurturing environment that significantly

enriches the learning process, making it more comprehensive and less daunting. This relationship empowers residents to navigate their roles more easily and avoid missteps. By sharing insights and experiences, mentors help new residents grasp the “how” and the “why” behind medical procedures and administrative tasks. Additionally, mentors offer valuable feedback, providing constructive criticism and encouragement vital for continuous improvement and skill refinement.

A trusted mentor is a reliable advisor for new residents to set realistic professional goals and discuss emerging ideas or concerns. This bond boosts confidence and nurtures a sense of belonging within the medical community. Furthermore, a robust mentorship relationship fuels professional growth and unlocks opportunities within and beyond the healthcare setting, laying the groundwork for success and fulfillment.⁶

Adaptability and Resilience

Dealing with unexpected situations is a normal part of residents' work, requiring quick adjustments, confident decision-making under pressure, and a flexible approach to patient care; thus, it is important that new residents are adaptable and resilient.

Adaptability—learning from mistakes and challenges—is essential for professional growth. Reflecting on failures, seeking feedback, and making changes to avoid future mistakes all foster a growth mindset and contribute to continuous improvement and enhanced clinical skills.

At the same time, building resilience—being able to quickly bounce back from difficulties and maintain a positive outlook despite setbacks—is critical. This includes self-care, seeking support from colleagues and mentors, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Remaining optimistic during tough times helps residents manage stress, avoid burnout, and sustain their passion for medicine.

Nelson Mandela once said, “Do not judge me by my success; judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” Embracing this mindset can not only help improve patient care but also boost the confidence and abilities of young health care professionals and enable

them to deliver exceptional care, prioritize their well-being, and positively impact their teams and patients.

Time Management

Learning how to manage their time and organize their schedules efficiently is essential for residents' success. As Peter Drucker stated, “Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed.” Residents can maintain focus and effectiveness by setting priorities, breaking tasks into smaller parts, and utilizing tools such as planners and apps. At the same time, striking a balance between work and personal life is vital for self-care and preventing burnout and reducing stress. Adequate rest, physical activity, and a healthy diet increase productivity and resilience. Seeking assistance from peers, mentors, and loved ones is also crucial.

Celebrate Your Wins

As a new resident, embracing and celebrating small victories is essential. Whether mastering procedures or handling administrative tasks, each accomplishment contributes to patient care. Recognizing and celebrating these victories, no matter how small, fosters positivity and resilience, enabling residents to succeed in facing challenges.

Conclusion

The transition period for new residents is a time of significant growth and challenges. Focusing on cultural assimilation, continuous learning, compassionate care, openness to feedback, strong mentorship, resilience, time management, and celebrating small victories will prepare residents to succeed. This preparation not only promotes personal growth but also ensures exacting standards of patient care. Equipped with these tools and insights, new residents can effectively navigate the complexities of their profession, making positive contributions to the medical field and the well-being of their patients. An remember, in the words of Roy T. Bennett, “Success is not how high you have climbed, but how you make a positive difference to the world.”

continued on page 162

health issue, including within lower socioeconomic groups and those from historically marginalized race and ethnic backgrounds where weight is an additional factor that may contribute to discrimination and bias that negatively affects health care.

It is important to include consistent education about bias and hate of all types in medical education. For example, ongoing work against racism and sexism in the medical community is necessary for continued effective work in fat activism. Success incorporating weight stigma education and weight-neutral approaches to care into medical school curricula will allow for expansion into other health profession training programs, furthering the positive impacts on patients. Reducing weight stigma in the medical school environment through longitudinal education that evokes empathy and understanding, plus positive role modeling from resident and attending physicians, has the potential to not only improve the health of patients in the future but also the health of medical students in the present.

Funding/Support: None declared.

Financial Disclosures: None declared.

REFERENCES

1. A healthy lifestyle-WHO recommendations. World Health Organization. Published May 2010. Accessed December 5, 2023. <https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/fact-sheets/item/a-healthy-lifestyle---who-recommendations>
2. Bacon L, Aphramor L. Weight science: evaluating the evidence for a paradigm shift. *Nutr J*. 2011;10:9. doi:10.1186/1475-2891-10-9
3. Puhl RM, Phelan SM, Nadglowski J, Kyle TK. Overcoming weight bias in the management of patients with diabetes and obesity. *Clin Diabetes*. 2016;34(1):44-50. doi:10.2337/diaclin.34.1.44
4. Tomiyama AJ, Carr D, Granberg EM, et al. How and why weight stigma drives the obesity 'epidemic' and harms health. *BMC Med*. 2018;16(1):123. doi:10.1186/s12916-018-1116-5
5. Clifford D, Ozier A, Bundros J, Moore J, Kreiser A, Morris MN. Impact of non-diet approaches on attitudes, behaviors, and health outcomes: a systematic review. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2015;47(2):143-55.e1. doi:10.1016/j.jneb.2014.12.002
6. Mensinger JL, Calogero RM, Stranges S, Tylka TL. A weight-neutral versus weight-loss approach for health promotion in women with high BMI: a randomized-controlled trial. *Appetite*. 2016;105:364-374. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2016.06.006

7. ASGE Training Committee, Pannala R, Sharaiha RZ, et al. Obesity core curriculum. *Gastrointest Endosc*. 2020;91(6):1221-1229. doi:10.1016/j.gie.2019.07.007
8. Chisholm A, Mann K, Peters S, Hart J. Are medical educators following General Medical Council guidelines on obesity education: if not why not? *BMC Med Educ*. 2013;13:53. doi:10.1186/1472-6920-13-53
9. Mastrocola MR, Roque SS, Benning LV, Stanford FC. Obesity education in medical schools, residencies, and fellowships throughout the world: a systematic review. *Int J Obes (Lond)*. 2020;44(2):269-279. doi:10.1038/s41366-019-0453-6
10. Phelan SM, Puhl RM, Burke SE, et al. The mixed impact of medical school on medical students' implicit and explicit weight bias. *Med Educ*. 2015;49(10):983-992. doi:10.1111/medu.12770
11. Phelan SM, Burgess DJ, Puhl R, et al. The adverse effect of weight stigma on the well-being of medical students with overweight or obesity: findings from a national survey. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2015;30(9):1251-1258. doi:10.1007/s11606-015-3266-x
12. Koran-Scholl J, Geske J, Khandalavala KR, Khandalavala B. Teaching module for obesity bias education: incorporating comprehensive competencies and innovative techniques. *BMC Med Educ*. 2023;23(1):340. doi:10.1186/s12909-023-04310-4
13. Fitterman-Harris HF, Vander Wal JS. Weight bias reduction among first-year medical students: a quasi-randomized, controlled trial. *Clin Obes*. 2021;11(6):e12479. doi:10.1111/cob.12479
14. Matharu K, Shapiro JF, Hammer RR, Kravitz RL, Wilson MD, Fitzgerald FT. Reducing obesity prejudice in medical education. *Educ Health (Abingdon)*. 2014;27(3):231-237. doi:10.4103/1357-6283.152176
15. Moore CH, Oliver TL, Randolph J, Dowdell EB. Interventions for reducing weight bias in healthcare providers: an interprofessional systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clin Obes*. 2022;12(6):e12545. doi:10.1111/cob.12545
16. Talumaa B, Brown A, Batterham RL, Kalea AZ. Effective strategies in ending weight stigma in healthcare. *Obes Rev*. 2022;23(10):e13494. doi:10.1111/obr.13494
17. Wijayatunga NN, Kim Y, Butsch WS, Dhurandhar EJ. The effects of a teaching intervention on weight bias among kinesiology undergraduate students. *Int J Obes (Lond)*. 2019;43(11):2273-2281. doi:10.1038/s41366-019-0325-0
18. Alberga AS, Pickering BJ, Alix Hayden K, et al. Weight bias reduction in health professionals: a systematic review. *Clin Obes*. 2016;6(3):175-188. doi:10.1111/cob.12147

Thriving in Your First Year of Medical Training

continued from page 159

New addition to *WMJ*

In this issue of *WMJ*, we launch a new feature—the “limited series”—to provide in-depth information on topics deemed relevant to the practice of medicine, such as tools for lifelong learning. They are generally solicited but, on occasion, may be published from submissions.

The first of these articles, “Statistical Thinking: Clinical Versus Statistical Significance,” stems from one of 6 modules that present the essence of biostatistics. This and the subsequent articles written by Robert Calder, MD, MS, and Jayshil Patel, MD, are aimed at both medical students and practicing clinicians to help them to be more effective consumers and communicators of medical literature.

Learn more about this new feature at wmjonline.org.

REFERENCES

1. Trzeciak S, Mazzarelli A. *Wonder Drug: 7 Scientifically Proven Ways That Serving Others Is the Best Medicine for Yourself*. St. Martin's Essentials; 2022.
2. Aziz F. Compassionate care essential for better clinical outcomes, burnout prevention. *WMJ*. 2023;122(3):160-161.
3. Aziz F. Compassionate care through the lens of generational understanding. *WMJ*. 2024;123(2):68-69.
4. Aziz F. Four essential laws of connecting with patients. *WMJ*. 2023;122(2):86-87.
5. Aziz F, Djamali KS. Providing feedback is essential for professional growth. *WMJ*. 2023;122(4):238-239.
6. Joe MB, Cusano A, Leckie J, Czuczman N, et al. Mentorship programs in residency: a scoping review. *J Grad Med Educ*. 2023;15(2):190-200. doi:10.4300/JGME-D-22-00415.1

advancing the art & science of medicine in the midwest

WMJ

WMJ (ISSN 1098-1861) is published through a collaboration between The Medical College of Wisconsin and The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. The mission of *WMJ* is to provide an opportunity to publish original research, case reports, review articles, and essays about current medical and public health issues.

© 2024 Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System and The Medical College of Wisconsin, Inc.

Visit www.wmjonline.org to learn more.