How to Choose a Project and Find Resources

Karen B. Domino, MD, MPH
Professor and Vice Chair for Clinical Research
Department of Anesthesiology & Pain Medicine
University of Washington, Seattle
What Are My Interests?

- Subspecialty area
- Type of research
  - Basic/translational science
  - Clinical
  - Outcome (database or medical record)
  - Educational
- Other types of scholarship
  - Review
  - CQI initiative
  - Educational initiative
What Are My Short-term Goals?

• Learn new skills/techniques
• Acquire new knowledge/expertise
• Improve written/verbal communication
• Enhance networking and collaboration
• Provide perspective on discipline
• Add value for career development
• Guide future career pathway
Do I Have Significant Other Commitments?

- Clinical activity
- Advanced degree course work
- Outside professional work
- Family responsibilities
- Avocations and interests
What Are My Career Goals?

• Where do I see myself in 10 and 25 years?
• What do I really enjoy?
• What is my passion?
• What career mix is best for me?
• What setting do I wish to work in?
• Work-life balance
Seven Roles of a Mentor

- Teacher
- Sponsor
- Advisor
- Role model
- Coach
- Confidant
Role of Mentors

- Knowledge and skill development
- Professional development
  - Networking and collaboration
  - Constructive feedback
  - Broad perspective on future
- Emotional support and engagement
- Role model
- Career consultant
How Mentors Guide Their Mentees’ Careers

- Create a plan
  - Vision
  - Help create/prioritize plan
- Tailor to individual mentee
  - Assess mentee’s goals/personality
  - Lead not direct
- Provide opportunities
  - Key contacts/collaborators
  - Give recognition
  - Place mentee’s career before their own
- Concrete activities
Characteristics of Good Mentors

- Personal qualities
  - Enthusiasm
  - Honesty
  - Compassion
  - Insightfulness
  - Selflessness
  - Wisdom

- Career guide is tailored to mentee
- Frequent, regular, high quality meetings
- Support personal/professional balance
How Do I Pick a Mentor?

- Area of interest
- Long-term career goals
- Personal style
- Networking/career advancement
- Previous success
How Do I Choose a Specific Project?

• Overall career goals
• Is it interesting or exciting to me?
• Practicability of the project
  • Can it be completed in time-frame?
    • Institutional approvals
    • Subject recruitment
    • Costs
  • Likelihood of results
  • Likelihood of publication
• Advice of mentor
Recipe for Success

- Good choice project and mentor(s)
- Divide project into small and larger goals
- Set time-line and re-evaluate frequently
- Don’t fret over “set-backs”
- Celebrate small successes
- Initiative, flexibility, and patience
- Expect to do “grunt” work
- Dialog with mentor(s)
How Can I Find the Resources I Need?

• Ask your mentor(s)
  • Suggested projects
  • Support staff
  • Analysis support
  • Funding support
• Ask other faculty in area of interest
• Ask departmental leadership
Existing Database Resources

- Medical record studies
- Docusys
- CQI databases (eg. UWMC, Safekids)
- AMALGA
- Disease registries – numerous
  - Trauma registry
  - Burn registry
  - Closed Claims Project/Registries
  - CPAIN
  - Pediatric Regional Anesthesia Network (PRAN)
Other Resources

• Educational Research (Lynne Robins)
• Regulatory approvals
• Survey data collection
  • Catalyst
  • REDCap: www.project-redcap.org
• Statistical analysis
  http://www.stat.washington.edu/consulting
• ITHS