

Career Advising: A Critical Period

The early years of medical school are critical in the students' specialty decision process. This is the time when students are being socialized into the culture of the University Medical Center. During this period, students with an interest in primary care and community service need to have their career aspirations validated. Many students will come into your practice with profound misconceptions about the challenges and rewards of primary care, especially in rural or urban underserved areas.

They are especially receptive to the perspectives of practitioners with whom they come into contact. Whether seriously considering a primary care specialty or taking the preceptorship only to gain some contact with "real medicine", students appreciate and need your input. We hope you will find time to offer them the following:

Your Role as a Mentor

In a retrospective study, students said that preceptor role modeling was most important to them, particularly, how the preceptor interacted with patients. Your honest assessment of their strengths and limitations is also valuable. Give suggestions on factors to consider in their career decisions. Provide your opinions on the satisfaction and drawbacks of your own career choices. Give tips for maintaining balance between professional life and other pursuits. Help the student define what is most satisfying and necessary for their future.

Promoting Interest in Primary Care

There is a projected need for more primary care physicians both regionally and nationally. Students need to see the rewards and challenges of primary care. You are uniquely qualified to demonstrate these to the student working with you.

Programs for Students

As a preceptor working with students early in their training, you are a key influence in promoting and maintaining student interest in primary care medicine. What you say and do has the potential for considerable

What Students Say.....

"I also learned how one might balance rural medicine with a family life."

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"He seemed to see it as his role to educate me as to all of the troubles of rural doctoring. This seemed to turn me off towards rural medicine more than getting me excited for it."

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"I learned that it is absolutely possible to keep loving medicine and feeling honored to be a part of it."

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impact on student career choice.

Here are a few tips that may help you to advise your students:

- Ask students what attracts them to primary care.
- Emphasize those aspects of practice in your contacts with the student.
- Emphasize the sources of your own professional satisfaction in primary care.

The School of Medicine has a strong advising program, encourage the student to develop an advising relationship.

What Students Say...

“It was a great opportunity to examine my values and my motives for medicine once again and think about how my choices about specialties will fit into my future plans.”

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