

DISABILITIES MEDICINE AREA OF CONCENTRATION

The Area of Concentration in Disabilities Medicine is designed for students with a strong interest in developing additional expertise in the issues facing individuals with disabilities in our health care system and society. Disabilities Medicine encompasses the body of knowledge about disabilities at multiple levels of analysis: the biological basis of disability, recommended clinical practices, functional impacts of disability and its treatment, environmental, social and community determinants of outcomes, and public health. The AOC promotes the development of skills in person- and family-centered practice, collaborative decision-making, functional assessments, cultural competence, and chronic care delivery. Participants learn about community resources and policies that interact with health care to improve clinical and functional outcomes for people with disabilities. Students who participate in the AOC in Disabilities Medicine support the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

GOALS

This program is designed to meet three major goals:

- To increase understanding about the nature of disabilities and their impact on individuals, families, communities, service providers, and the health care system.
- To prepare medical students for careers that serve individuals with disabilities and their families in an appropriate, helpful, and respectful manner.
- To encourage medical students and physicians to participate in the creation, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs for individuals with disabilities.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this program, participants will be able to:

- Discuss disabilities from multiple perspectives, such as etiology, prevalence, recommended practices, impact on affected individuals, and social participation.
- Define, practice, and promote person-centered and family-centered, culturally competent care.
- Describe challenges that individuals with disabilities face in obtaining high quality chronic care.
- Support the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in regular education or community life.
- Interact with non-medical services and resources that support individuals with disabilities.
- Recognize the contribution of public policies such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act on the care of individuals with disabilities.
- Contribute new knowledge about disabilities through research, innovative practice or scholarly activity.

REQUIREMENTS

Faculty Mentor: Students maintain regular contact with a knowledgeable faculty member who has interest or experience in the area of disabilities. The faculty member oversees the student's academic program and progress.

Research Project: Students participate in a scholarly research project under faculty supervision and disseminate their results in abstracts, poster presentations, publications, or related venues. This project may be used to satisfy the requirements for a scholarly project.

Community-based or Non-Medical Services: Students visit at least two agencies, services, or programs associated with disabilities. This requirement can be met by visiting or volunteering at United Cerebral Palsy, the ARC, early intervention programs, special education programs, Special Olympics, and others.

Disabilities Medicine Lunch Seminars: Students attend monthly informal meetings to learn about disabilities from individuals with disabilities or their family members. Participants are encouraged to contribute to discussions and to learn about the patient and family perspective.

Disabilities Medicine Journal Clubs: Students participate in a monthly journal club and are encouraged to assume leadership for the choice of topics and readings and for leading discussions. Topics usually center on current practice guidelines or evaluations of innovative treatments.

Fourth Year Elective: Students take a one-month elective in Disabilities Medicine which provides a set of diverse experiences in various hospital and community agencies.

Reflective Journal: Students keep a reflective journal throughout the program. Entries may include thoughts or feelings about visits to community services, patients encountered on standard rotations, discussions from seminars or journal clubs, current events, and personal growth.

Portfolio: Students assemble a portfolio that includes a personal statement of philosophy, as well as papers, research projects, clinical notes, selected journal entries, evaluations, and other evidence of the educational experience. A committee of two faculty members evaluates the portfolio in the fourth year.

TIMELINE

The requirements for the AOC span across all four years of medical school and include the following areas: Content, Service, Mentorship, Clinical Experience, and Scholarship.

Opportunities for these requirements are delineated by year:

Year 1

- Attendance at Disabilities Medicine Lunch Seminars
- Attendance at Disabilities Medicine Journal Clubs
- By end of year, declare enrollment in the AOC

Summer Between Year 1 and Year 2

- Recommended time for research or scholarly project

Year 2

- Identification of faculty member
- Continued attendance at lunch seminars and journal clubs
- Visits to non-medical services for individuals with disabilities
- Participation in poster presentations about scholarly projects
- Reflective journaling and beginning of creation of portfolio

- Selected readings on disability as they relate to standard curriculum

Year 3

- Attendance at lunch seminars and journal clubs as feasible during clinical rotations
- Regular meetings with faculty member
- Continued journaling and creation of portfolios

Year 4

- Attendance at lunch seminars and journal clubs as feasible
- Continued journaling and creation of portfolios
- Fourth year elective in Disabilities Medicine
- Completion of research or scholarly project
- Regular meetings with faculty member (at least 4 times during the year)
- Reflective journal for faculty evaluation
- Presentation of portfolio

AOC DIRECTOR

Betty Liu, MD