Introducing a New Graduate Certificate Program in Patient Centered Research

This fall, Thomas Jefferson University will introduce a new graduate certificate program in Patient Centered Research. A collaborative effort between the Jefferson Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (JGSBS) and the Jefferson School of Population Health (JSPH), this 18-credit program is designed to train students in the principles and methods of patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR) and comparative effectiveness research (CER).

What are PCOR and CER?

PCOR assesses the benefits and harms of preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, palliative, or health delivery system interventions to inform decision making, highlighting comparisons and outcomes that matter to people. PCOR is inclusive of an individual’s preferences, autonomy and needs, focusing on outcomes that people notice and care about such as survival, function, symptoms, and health-related quality of life.

CER generates and synthesizes evidence that compares the benefits and harms of alternative methods to prevent, diagnose, treat, and monitor a clinical condition or to improve the delivery of care. CER may be a systematic research review evaluating existing clinical trials, clinical studies, and other research. It may also be research that compares one method to another. The purpose of CER is to assist consumers, clinicians, purchasers, and policy makers to make informed decisions that will improve health care at both the individual and population levels. In order to carry out studies that improve patient health outcomes and reduce health disparities, investigators will need to understand patient-centered and comparative effectiveness research methodologies. Patient centered outcomes and comparative effectiveness research (PCOR-CER) play critical roles in defining the paths to achieve these goals.

Increasingly, federal funding organizations that focus on clinical, behavioral, and translational topic areas are requiring a patient-centered focus on research design and analysis. Three such organizations are the National Cancer Institute (NCI), Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).

Who should consider enrolling in the Certificate program?

Persons with an undergraduate degree who want to expand their knowledge base and career opportunities in patient-centered research should consider enrolling. Students may come from clinical or scientific backgrounds. It is anticipated that most students will already have an advanced degree, often in a healthcare discipline, and will include faculty, medical fellows and residents, and employees engaged in basic, clinical, and translational research. The Certificate program will be available to employees at Jefferson and other health care organizations in Philadelphia, and those in regional health systems who are interested in PCOR-CER.

What is the Certificate curriculum?

The 18 credit (7 course) Certificate consists of a core curriculum (15 credits) and an elective course (3 credits) that will give students expertise in a specific aspect of PCOR-CER. The core curriculum courses will provide the necessary background in statistics and epidemiology to build an understanding of PCOR-CER, and will also cover the basics of health services research, an introduction to comparative effectiveness research and patient-centered research, and an introduction to the field of decision support and shared decision making. Early in their coursework, students will be encouraged to enroll in the integrative seminar, which will introduce the literature of patient-centered outcomes research with in-class discussions of case studies and journal articles. The core curriculum will be a springboard to further investigations of multiple types and areas of PCOR and patient centered CER. Several courses already exist in the JGSBS and Jefferson School of Population Health (JSPH) that will satisfy some certificate requirements, and four new courses are being developed.

The certificate is designed to be completed on a part-time basis and does not require a research thesis. Courses meet once per week in late afternoon or early evening. Most students will take one course per semester, and new students can start in any of the four terms. The six colleges and schools at Jefferson have an existing agreement to accept students from each other, assuming pre-requisites have been met. Thus, certificate courses could be taken in JGSBS or JSPH. This arrangement allows greater flexibility for complex schedules and diverse interests. In addition, some or all of the credits taken for the Certificate may be transferred into a Master’s degree program, should the trainee wish to receive that level of training.

Is tuition covered by the Tuition Benefit?

Since most of the initial trainees will either be employees of the University or the Hospital, they will be eligible to use their
Jefferson employee Tuition Benefit to cover the majority of the cost of the courses. The benefit covers 90% of the tuition cost up to $7500 per fiscal year, with the employee therefore responsible for at least 10% of the tuition cost. Also, university and hospital employees are not required to pay the technology and library fees assessed of other students.

Can I take just one or two of the courses?
Yes. Most of the courses can be taken without pre-requisites. Individual courses can be taken as a non-degree student.

Are any of the courses offered online?
Yes. Currently AHE 509, AHE 506 and HQS 503 are offered online.

Who should I contact if I am interested?
For any questions, please email Carol Beck, PhD, Assistant Dean, Jefferson Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at carol.beck@jefferson.edu.

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Graduate Certificate in Patient Centered Research (PCR):
Core Courses and Electives

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<tr>
<th>Core Courses (15 credits Required):</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GC 660 Statistical Methods of Data Analysis (JGSBS) or PBH 504 Basic Public Health Statistics (JSPH)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>MI 580 Principles of Epidemiology (JGSBS) or AHE 509 Epidemiology for Outcomes Research (JSPH)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHE 506 Subjective Outcomes in Healthcare Evaluation (JSPH)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Decision Support and Shared Decision Making in Health Care (JGSBS)</td>
<td>2 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Comparative Effectiveness &amp; Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (JGSBS)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Integrative Seminar in Patient-Centered Research (JGSBS)</td>
<td>1 credits</td>
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<tr>
<th>Elective Courses (3 credits Required, students choose one):</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>HQS 503 Healthcare Quality &amp; Safety; Measurement and Outcomes Analysis (JSPH)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Analysis of Large Databases (JGSBS)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBH 515 Cultural Humility and Competence (JSPH)</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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TOTAL (Required and Electives)  
*New courses created for the PCR Certificate  
18 credits