The Educational Program

The Curriculum

The curriculum at Sidney Kimmel Medical College has been developed to provide learning opportunities that enable medical students to acquire fundamental knowledge, develop professional attitudes and basic skills, and appreciate principles relevant to healthcare in the context of the community. We strive to foster in each student the lifelong desire and expertise to seek and evaluate new information both in pursuit of solutions to medical problems, and to educate our patients and colleagues. Our aim is to enable each student, as part of a larger healthcare team, to practice with clinical competence and effectively utilize healthcare resources. We welcome our students into the profession of medicine, and our goal throughout the four years of education and training is to facilitate each individual's professional growth and development. We commit to embodying the highest standards of civility, honesty, and integrity in all aspects of our personal and professional lives.

In recent years, curricular changes have been introduced to keep pace with the rapid expansion in scientific knowledge and dramatic changes in our healthcare delivery system. The curriculum balances the acquisition of a "core" of scientific information and the development of demonstrable communication and interpersonal skills and in medical problem-solving. An exposure to medical humanities has been added early in the curriculum in acknowledgment of the importance of keen observation skills, cultural competence and emotional intelligence.

The primary goals of the curriculum at Sidney Kimmel Medical College are to: (1) provide each student with a core curriculum that contains the sine qua non that should pertain to all physicians; (2) provide each student with advanced curriculum opportunities in order to explore in greater depth areas of basic and clinical medical sciences; and (3) enable the future physician to develop a humanistic, collaborative and scientific approach toward prevention and the care of people with medical problems.

Additional goals are to: (1) teach students the tentative nature of scientific conclusions; (2) encourage students to assume responsibility for their own education and to diminish their dependence on the teacher as a sole source of information; (3) encourage students to think critically and independently within the framework of social responsibility; and (4) encourage students to develop a logical approach to the analysis and management of clinical problems and (5) prepare students to function effectively in our complex health care system. Recognizing that entering students have multiple backgrounds and goals and will pursue varied careers, the curriculum at Jefferson incorporates sufficient breadth and flexibility to address individual educational needs.

One of the biggest challenges facing students in adapting to medical school curriculum is absorbing and understanding the information presented to them. Even though the quantity of material is challenging, it is nonetheless a careful distillation of available information in basic and clinical sciences into a core program. Students will find that the material is intrinsically no more difficult from a conceptual viewpoint than that presented in any advanced undergraduate college science course. The only difference is the amount of material presented during the medical curriculum. Success in mastering the material demands that students develop excellent study habits and always keep current on class material.

The four-year curriculum has been designed to achieve these goals. In the first year, the biomedical sciences emphasize normal human structure and function. These topics are taught in conjunction with the first phase of the medical practice curriculum that stresses the relationships of these sciences to professional development, systems-based care, evidence-based medicine, the biopsychosocial model of health and clinical skills. The second year shifts the science focus to the pathophysiology of disease and methods used to diagnose and treat illness. The medical practice curriculum continues with added emphasis on the development of "bedside" skills. The third and fourth years are an immersion in clinical medicine, and primary and specialty care in outpatient and inpatient settings. Emphasis is placed on core medical specialties with many opportunities for electives. All students revisit the biomedical sciences during the third and fourth years, in core clerkships, during the advanced basic science courses and by choosing to conduct independent research.

Medical school is the first formal step in the lifelong process of medical education. The skills developed in meeting the challenges of adjusting to medical school will be honed as each individual progresses through residency training and into a career in medicine. There is no one formula for success. Each individual must take responsibility for his or her own mastery of the curriculum and professional development. The faculty, administration, staff, and fellow students are here to guide you through this challenging and rewarding experience.