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LETTER

Research by Residents: Diversify Your Portfolio

To the Editor:

We read with great interest the article titled "Clinical Research During Internal Medicine Residency: A Practical Guide," by Hamann and colleagues.¹ This article discusses an apropos issue and effectively addresses the myriad of problems faced by internal medicine resident researchers today. However, we would like to comment.

First, we disagree somewhat with the authors' statement that only clinical and not basic science research can generally be done during a busy internal medicine residency. Although published data on the volume of basic versus clinical research done by residents are lacking, it has been our experience that, similar to clinical research projects, basic science projects can also be completed by residents if these are kept simple and designed to account for limited resident availability. In essence, the longitudinal model for a resident research project presented by the authors also can guide residents in successfully executing a basic science project. It is important that motivated residents, with or without prior laboratory experience, be encouraged to pursue aptly designed basic science projects so that they can continue to develop and diversify their research skills.

Second, the authors have not sufficiently addressed the issue of publication of case reports, one of the most common research activities conducted by medicine residents.^{2,3} Although case reports do not comprise hypothesis-based research and thus cannot substitute for it, they can certainly play a crucial complementary role. This is primarily because they can be published early in internship when the hypothesis-based project is still in the preparatory phase. Consequently, they can be a confidence building step for residents who are too intimidated or uncertain about the outcome of a long-term research project. They also are effective exercises in literature review, medical writing, poster presentation, and publication, which will be critical to the success of a hypothesis-based project later in residency. Publication of 1 or more case reports can be an effective "backup" to a research project if the latter runs into trouble or cannot be presented by the time fellowship applications are due. Although there has been a decline in the acceptance of case

reports for publication by most journals, some of them reserve sections for publication of case reports by residents/trainees from affiliated institutions (eg, *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*). These should be fully used by residents if available at their institution.

Finally, clinical research training programs are now offered at many medical schools across the United States.⁴ Although most residents would be too busy to attend the entire program, they can attend classes on selected topics of interest that are generally held at convenient times of the day or sometimes over the weekend. By attending some of these sessions and interacting with faculty and students, residents can hone their research skills, obtain access to a variety of research resources, and identify potential mentors.

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