University of Cincinnati Adds Master’s Program in Clinical and Translational Research

CINCINNATI—A new University of Cincinnati (UC) master’s degree program will offer practicing physicians comprehensive training in clinical research. The goal is to train more physicians who can lead independent clinical research projects.

The program was approved by the UC Board of Trustees in September and is currently under review by the Ohio Board of Regents.

“For the past 20 years, the medical community has become increasingly concerned about the reluctance of young physicians to seek additional training and pursue clinical research,” says Erin Haynes, DrPH, an epidemiologist with UC’s environmental health department and the program’s director. “We have fewer physicians pursuing careers in clinical research and an unacceptably high attrition rate for accomplished clinical investigators currently practicing.”

The American Association of Medical Colleges says there is an urgent need for medical schools and teaching hospitals to create new models for clinical research training and provide a nurturing environment in which the next generation of physician-scientists can conduct high-quality research.

Haynes says the UC master’s program was designed to give students in-depth training in epidemiology, study design, biostatistics, ethical issues and many other areas related to helping physician-scientists master the challenges of conducting clinical research in the next decade.

“Our master’s program fills a void in training that physicians are asking for—and need—to be effective clinical investigators who make smart decisions when conducting clinical research,” adds Joel Tsevat, MD, MPH, a UC professor of medicine and director of outcomes research for the internal medicine department.

Formally developed in 2004, the new master’s in clinical and translational research builds on existing courses offered through the UC Department of Environmental Health. This includes four specialty areas or tracks led by experts in the College of Pharmacy, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and the College of Medicine’s departments of environmental health, internal medicine and pediatrics.

University officials say the 48 credit hour master’s program can be completed on a part-time basis in two years and currently has 41 students enrolled: 39 physicians and two pharmacists. It is offered through UC’s environmental health department and is one of only three master’s level courses of this kind in Ohio.

Under Tsevat’s leadership, UC applied for a K30 clinical research curriculum award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In August 2005, UC received a $1.5 million NIH grant that enabled it to add the necessary coursework to complete the master’s level curriculum.

Physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals interested in pursuing evidence-based clinical research are eligible to apply to the master’s program.

Curriculum topics include: clinical epidemiology, translational research, clinical effectiveness, biostatistics, clinical research informatics, molecular epidemiology and clinical trials. Upon completion of the program, graduates should be able to develop research hypotheses, specific criteria and methodology for conducting patient-oriented research and understand how to apply contemporary research tools to these clinically relevant areas of investigation.

The UC curriculum includes a combination of instructional coursework, seminars and individual mentoring sessions designed to foster both the analytic and quantitative skills necessary for conducting research. Students must also complete a thesis based upon their own independent clinical, laboratory or field research.

“What I love about this program is that it is designed to respect the time constraints of full-time clinicians,” says Emily DeFranco, DO, an obstetrician-gynecologist who began participating in the program this summer. “I’m able to pursue my scientific endeavors and education without compromising my clinical or family obligations.”

http://healthnews.uc.edu/news/?/7718/
“Many of my mentors were trained in epidemiology and biostatistics. I was in awe of the tools they had at their disposal because it allowed them to be truly independent researchers,” she adds.
“That was something I quickly sought to emulate, but I also recognized my deficiencies. My base knowledge is sound, but I have a lot to learn when it comes to advanced analytic methods and complex study designs.”

For more information on the master’s of clinical and translational research, visit www.eh.uc.edu/clinicalresearch.