

Summer Research Program for Students Underrepresented in Hematology-Oncology



OVERVIEW

To address the current underrepresentation of minorities in the profession of hematology-oncology, the Division of Hematology-Oncology, in collaboration with the Abramson Cancer Center, supports a **Summer Research Program for Students Underrepresented in Hematology-Oncology**. This program is available for up to two Perelman School of Medicine students who are underrepresented minorities in medicine per year. This program consists of an 8-week summer internship between June 21st and August 13th, 2021. During the program, the students will have an immersive experience in the field of hematology-oncology, during which they will conduct a mentored research project, attend daily educational conferences with the hematology-oncology fellows, and attend clinics with their assigned mentor.

BACKGROUND

One of the most pressing health care challenges facing the nation is the critical need for more minority physician researchers. By 2050, racial and ethnic minorities are projected to account for half of the U.S. population. While African-Americans and Hispanics are among the fastest growing segments of the population, they are also the most severely underrepresented minorities in medicine. Although blacks and African-Americans comprise 13% of the U.S. population, they account for only 4% of the physician workforce. African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans together make up 30% of the U.S. population and only 8.9% of practicing doctors. The need for minority physicians in Hematology-Oncology is even more striking. Data from the American Society of Clinical Oncology show that that African-Americans accounted for only 2.3% of the oncology workforce, while Hispanics accounted for only 5.8%.

According to the Federal Office of Minority Health, the low number of underrepresented minority researchers leads to the underfunding of minority health research initiatives and agendas as well as a lack of culturally appropriate theories, models, and methodologies that could advance minority health and redress the existing disparities in U.S. health and health care. Thus, as disparities in health and health care continue to widen, it has grown increasingly evident that we need more minority researchers who personally understand the social, economic, political, and environmental determinants of racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM

To address the current underrepresentation of minorities in the fields of hematology and oncology, we developed a **Summer Research Program for Students Underrepresented in Hematology and Oncology** for up to two medical students who are underrepresented minorities in medicine per year. This program consists of an 8-week summer internship between June 21st and August 13th, 2021.

THE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM:

1. Mentored research experience

Penn faculty members from the Division of Hematology-Oncology and the Abramson Cancer Center are recruited to be mentors for this program. Prior to the beginning of the program, students are assigned a research mentor based on the student's interests and a research project with defined goals.

The mentored research experience consists of some combination of the following: conducting literature searches and reviews, conducting interviews with subjects according to established protocols, designing surveys, data collection, entry, and analysis, and assistance with abstract and manuscript preparation. The students will be fully integrated into the research team and participate in all team meetings. The PI and Research Coordinator will train the students to use existing protocols, and monitor their work to ensure quality and consistency.

2. Educational conferences

Students attend a daily educational conference with the current hematology-oncology fellows, a weekly tumor board conference with their primary mentor, and regularly scheduled research team meetings.

3. Attendance at a national meeting

Each student will receive a travel stipend of \$1800 to attend a national scientific meeting (such as ASCO, ASH, or AACR) with their mentor.

4. Career guidance

The students will receive guidance on future career development activities and training, on an as needed basis.

5. Research Presentation

We organize a symposium at the end of the program where the students present their research and receive feedback from faculty. To prepare, students receive one-on-one presentation coaching.

6. Stipend

To offset living expenses during the research program, each participating student will receive a stipend in the amount of \$3000.

APPLICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

Applications will be accepted until March 8, 2021.

We welcome applications from all Perelman School of Medicine students who are members of groups who are underrepresented in the medical profession, which include American Indian/Alaska Native, black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.

Eligible applicants will demonstrate an interest in clinical, translational, or health services research in the fields of hematology and/or oncology.

To be considered, please submit the following materials:

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. One letter of recommendation
3. Personal Statement describing your background (including any research experience) and career goals

Email these materials to:

Erin Aakhus, MD, MSHP
Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine, Division of Hematology-Oncology
Associate Fellowship Program Director
Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania
Erin.Aakhus@penmedicine.upenn.edu