

Behavioral Medicine training in UVA's Family Medicine Residency



The Behavioral Medicine program in UVA's Family Medicine Residency is staffed by two clinical psychologists on faculty, as well as three advanced doctoral students in Clinical Psychology. We are housed in the Primary Care Center just outside the residents' workroom, where we interact with residents on a daily basis.

The Department approaches Behavioral Medicine training from an integrative perspective. That is, the Department has for many years integrated behavioral medicine skills into the overall training of our residents, from the first week of internship orientation to the end of third year. While the training takes place throughout the curriculum, for the sake of description we can divide it into four main areas.



1. **Collaborative Care** – As part of our effort to prepare our physicians for the psychosocial problems their patients will present, the Behavioral Scientists in the department are available by pager for immediate behavioral consultation to family medicine residents and attendings anywhere they are in the hospital. When a resident pages one of us, typically we go to where the resident is, check in with him or her and get a brief description of the issue at hand, meet with the patient, and then make recommendations to the physician regarding intervention or referrals. The purpose of these consultations is two-fold: first, it allows residents to strengthen their behavior medicine knowledge on the ground, and second, it enhances our patient care to collaborate in this way. Issues typically addressed in Collaborative Care include assessment and support of patients with acute psychological problems, encouraging health-related behavior change, providing child development assessment and parenting guidance, and assisting family members in talking about difficult medical decisions.



2. **The Family Stress Clinic (the FSC)** – The Department of Family Medicine houses a psychological clinic in our primary care clinic. Family Medicine residents and attendings, as well as other sources, refer patients to the FSC for psychotherapy and assessment. Second-year Family Medicine residents rotate through the FSC and participate as part of the clinical team behind a one-way mirror. Residents also have the opportunity to practice Motivational Interviewing and function as therapists themselves during this rotation as a method of building their competence and confidence in addressing psychosocial issues.

3. **Didactics** – Communication skills, working with challenging patients, normal psychological development, and diagnosis and intervention with psychological disorders are also taught didactically. The Department holds Behavioral Rounds twice a month, when difficult cases are presented or specific psychosocial topics are presented. Some recent topics that have been covered include chronic pain, motivational interviewing, dating violence, post-partum depression, refugee care, and coping with mistakes. Residents also participate in seminars on behavioral topics each year during their Essentials of Family Medicine month. These concentrate on improving communication skills and strengthening residents' comfort in helping patients with both normal and problematic psychological issues.

4. **Resilient Practitioner Curriculum** – Our Department is committed to helping our residents become Resilient Practitioners. Toward that end, residents participate in a three-year curriculum to better manage the stresses of medical practice, both in terms of taking care of their own physical and mental health, and in terms of continuing to develop



intellectually and personally as healers. Interns participate in a weekly Intern Lunch, led by a behavioral scientist and designed to provide a safe place for support and reflection during the critical intern year. Second and third year residents are participating in a bi-weekly Practice Inquiry group designed to teach physicians how to handle the clinical uncertainty inherent in our practices. Resilient Practitioner topics are also included in the didactic sessions offered through Behavioral Rounds and seminars each year.

Please feel free to ask more about Behavioral Medicine in the Family Medicine Residency. Contact Claudia Allen, PhD at 434-924-1622 or at claudiaallen@virginia.edu or Ted Siedlecki, PhD at 434-924-1613 or at tedsiedlecki@virginia.edu.



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