MENTORED EXPERIENCE TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES IN RESEARCH (METEOR) PROGRAM
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Objectives
A strategic goal of the CTSA Consortium is to support training and career development of clinical and translational scientists, with emphasis on those from under-represented backgrounds (URM). Unlike other short-term summer programs, the METEOR Program, launched in June 2012, provides a long-term mentored educational experience to incoming URM medical students to increase their participation and success. The program is promoted as a competitive fellowship opportunity with the hope that it will serve as an incentive for highly-qualified URM students who are interested in an academic research career to enroll and successfully matriculate at GW. Based on past research experience and expressed interest, each student is paired with a clinical or translational research mentor with whom to work through the duration of medical school. To date, there are 7 students.

Methods
In the summer prior to matriculation to GW’s Medical School program, METEOR students participate in an 8-week mentored research experience. Students complete training in responsible conduct of research (CRITI and HIPAA) and attend the weekly education series currently offered to high school and college students working in the CNHS Clinical Research Institute (CRI). This education series is augmented by field trips to institutions critical to biomedical research and uniquely situated in the DC area, including the NIH Clinical Center and Food and Drug Administration (FDA). An orientation session and “end of summer” dinner is held with program leaders, the students and their mentors.

In their first and second years of medical school (Academic Year 1 and 2), METEOR students enter the Research track (http://osme.gwu.edu/osme-program/research) to augment their medical school curriculum, which is aligned with the national CTSA Consortium core competencies for clinical and translational research (CTR)¹. The students continue their research during a second 8-week, mentored research experience (Summer 2) and serve as mentors to the incoming cohort. Finally, in their fourth and final year of medical school (Academic Year 4), the students complete a 4-6 week elective related to their research study. All students are required to present their work at a research forum at both GW and CNMC Research Day events (spring) and are encouraged to present both an oral and poster presentation. (Year 1 and 2)

In June 2013, the METEOR Program was awarded an Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) Award from GW’s Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion to evaluate the program. Using a comparison group of non-METEOR medical students who participated in a similar summer research program, a mixed methods study is underway. Research skills self-assessments and qualitative interviews are being conducted. A university-wide workshop on mentoring the diverse trainee was held on March 18, 2014. Presentation of the research findings at a national conference and publication are planned.

Preliminary Results
The METEOR Program is successful in increasing research skills and interest, and establishing mentoring relationships. Challenges include identifying and training mentors.

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Impact
The program addresses the critical challenge of mentoring URM students since, like most medical schools nationally, GW has few URM faculty, and some non-URM faculty may feel less equipped and comfortable serving as mentors to URM mentees². Our goal is that participation in the METEOR Program will enhance URM medical students’ overall experience in medical school and research skills, and encourage them to consider careers as clinical and translational researchers. Through training, mentors improve their mentoring skills for URM and non-URM medical students and other trainees. The METEOR Program may serve as a model for other mentorship programs.

References

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