
Insights from a Health Admin Fellow

After completing my residency in Emergency Medicine at University of New Mexico in June of 2013, I transitioned into a one-year fellowship in health administration at Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) through the Department of Emergency Medicine. The experience has expanded my awareness of hospital systems and hospital finance and will significantly influence my clinical practice.

One of the most surprising discoveries during my fellowship is how few physicians understand the systems and operational issues involved in providing clinical care. Even fewer have knowledge of any process improvement methods to create positive change in those systems. This has not traditionally been part of medical school or residency education and has been left to a few doctors who have been clinical leaders and transitioned into administration in their mid to late careers. However, this paradigm is shifting. With the many challenges of health care reform, the rising numbers of physicians becoming hospital employees and the increased interest in quality improvement there are more and more younger physicians interested in changing health systems. As one indicator of this interest, the number of physicians completing Master in Business Administration (MBA) or other similar masters degrees in management or finance is on the rise.¹

My fellowship has two major components: coursework toward the Healthcare MBA offered through OHSU and the practical implementation of quality improvement initiatives in the emergency department using Lean methodology. Coursework coupled with the practical implementation piece has been key to solidifying my knowledge and providing me with the real world skills needed for a health administration position after I complete the fellowship.

I have found the experience and work difficult but very rewarding. I would encourage current medical students and residents to get involved with a quality improvement or patient safety initiative to better learn what it takes to create positive change in a system. These skills will make you valuable wherever you work. As for me, I am staying on as clinical faculty at OHSU and continuing my work on improving care in the emergency department and throughout the hospital.

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Health Administration Fellow OHSU, former CIR leader and co-founder of the *CIR-UNM QI Journal* in 2011

1 Milt Freudenheim, Adjusting, More M.D.'s Add MBA, N.Y. Times (Sept. 5, 2011). http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/business/doctors-discover-the-benefits-of-business-school.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.