



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Training in the Psychiatry of Developmental Disabilities

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To the editor

We read with interest the commentaries (1,2) and editorial (3) regarding our article (4) describing the deficits in psychiatry residency training specific to people with Developmental Disabilities (DD). Drs. Thaker and Lunsky have suggested a number of approaches to improve training related to DD, including using a competency-based approach, integrating training in DD into existing clinical rotations, and faculty development (1). At the same time, in his editorial, Dr. McLennan appropriately asks whether providing further subspecialty rotations during residency will further fractionate training at the expense of the development of core competencies across clinical populations (3). Further, Thaker and Lunsky (1) and McLennan (3) note that finding available time for more training in DD may be difficult given the time constraints extant in residency training programs.

At the same time, it seems clear that people with DD and mental health problems need psychiatrists with specialized skills and with comfort in working with this population. One potential approach to increasing the capacity for psychiatrists to work with people with DD is the development of post-residency specialty training opportunities in DD. To that end, at Western University in London, Ontario, we have developed a one-year, funded clinical fellowship in the psychiatry of DD. The fellowship provides fellows with extensive clinical opportunities in psychiatry and related disciplines, allowing fellows to enhance their skills in this underserved area and prepares them for independent practice in the Psychiatry of DD.

Fellows participate in Psychiatry, Genetics, Developmental Pediatrics, Neurology, and Rehabilitation Medicine clinics. Rather than using a traditional approach with trainees

learning in blocks of time within each specialty, this fellowship uses a novel, longitudinal approach in which fellows will work in the same psychiatry clinics with the same supervisor over the course of the year. This approach, in which trainees see the same patients multiple times over the year, provides the opportunity to develop expertise in the ongoing management of mental health problems in people with Developmental Disabilities.

Further information about the Psychiatry of Developmental Disabilities Fellowship can be found at ddp.uwo.ca or by contacting Sarah O'Flanagan at sarah.oflanagan@lhsc.on.ca.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no financial relationships or other ties to disclose.

References

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