

Jessica McCarthy, PA-C, Marissa Cauley PA-C, Leanne Wines PA-C, Elizabeth Hankinson PA-C, Marissa Stein PA-C, Phuong Ngu PA-C, Maria Vardaro PA-C, Annie Kozak PA-C, Tiffany Andrade German PA-C, Audrey Fritzinger PA-C, Sarah Fittro PA-C

Introduction

NCCPA survey data between 2017 and 2021 demonstrated no change in racial diversity within the PA profession: 80% of PAs identify as white, 3.3% as Black, 6.8% as Hispanic. These demographics are discordant with the Boston community, where 25% of residents identify as Black or African American and 19.8% as Hispanic or Latino. Racial and ethnic minorities have a higher burden of chronic disease necessitating increased health services. African Americans and other minorities have reported less partnership with healthcare providers, less participation in medical decisions, and lower levels of satisfaction with care.

Objectives

To mentor two Underrepresented in Medicine (URiM) individuals interested in becoming PAs, by providing exposure to various PA practices at BWH, strengthening their PA program applications, and building professional networks for future careers.

Methods

We received the **2022 Step Up Grant** ("PCA-to-PA Mentorship Program") from the **NCCPA Health Foundation** to provide shadowing, mentorship, and funding support the pursuit of becoming a PA. We received 14 applicants from applicants identifying as URiM backgrounds and selected two Patient Care Assistants (PCAs) for the inaugural program. Over the year, they shadowed extensively on the Hospitalist Medicine team and in multiple specialties (Figure 2). Activities included journal club, skills session for learning phlebotomy, and PA panels. We assisted with personal statements, wrote recommendation letters, emailed their top programs to highlight their applications, and conducted mock interviews. Both participants received reimbursement of costs relevant to PA pursuit for total of \$1250.

Results

Both participants received multiple PA school interviews and acceptances. One participant received a full scholarship for the PA program (Figure 3). They continued to work within MGB prior to starting PA programs and remain in contact with our team since the completion of the mentoring program.

Figure 1: Applicants

14 total applicants identified as:

- URiM: 100%
- Bilingual: 71%
- First generation immigrant: 28%

2 applicants selected

Figure 2: Departments Shadowed

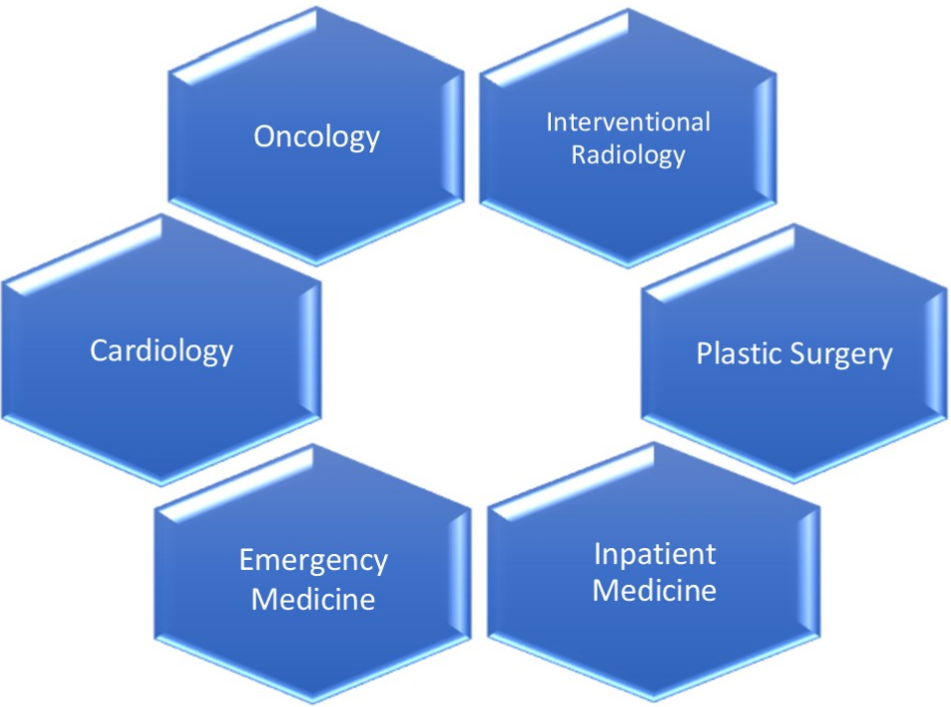


Figure 3: Outcome Summary

- **16 total PA program interviews** (7, 9 respectively)
- Multiple PA program acceptances
- **100% mentees accepted on first application attempt and attended PA school, matriculated Fall 2024**

Conclusions

"Having a mentor really solidified my understanding of the career while also advising me on my next steps. No one in my family is in healthcare so navigating through it was a huge challenge overall. My mentor eased that challenge and showed their belief in my future success..."

"This program was excellent and has led me to create long-lasting relationships with my mentors. I'm so grateful for this experience and would recommend this opportunity to any student interested in pursuing a career as a PA..."

Our year long mentorship program aimed to increase racial diversity with the PA profession by offering shadowing and structured PA school application readiness. Our two participants, PCAs of URiM backgrounds, were accepted into several PA programs. We received positive feedback from the participants and seek to continue to improve and expand the project.

Discussion and Future Plans

To expand our outreach and inclusivity, we secured a second NCCPA Step Up grant for "BWH PA Mentorship Program." We widened the applicant pool to include candidates in any direct patient care role applying to PA programs. We received 20 applications and have accepted 2 participants. The grant enhanced educational and mentorship offerings with the new cohort. In parallel, the grant also provided funding to introduce city of Boston high school students to the PA profession through educational sessions at our medical simulation center. The students rotated through skill stations of suturing, ultrasound, CPR/ACLS, and laparoscopic surgery simulation. To date we have held 5 sessions with 103 students joining and 47 APP volunteers teaching. Post evaluation surveys indicating that 94% respondents reported the activity increased their interest in healthcare career.

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