Faculty Development: Teaching Tips for Faculty

by Archana Pradhan, MD, MPH, assistant professor of OB/GYN, and assistant dean for education

As faculty members at RWJMS, we have the privilege and daunting task of educating future physicians, physicians who will be taking care of us. It can be an incredibly rewarding experience for the teacher and the learner.

Most of us have started our teaching careers using the skills we have developed for patient care – effective communication skills and strong clinical knowledge. Although these skills are important, few preceptors have received any formal training in teaching skills and most of us may benefit from new ideas and methods. Through this newsletter, the Office of Education would like to help our faculty members by providing some succinct and immediately usable teaching tips. In this issue, we will focus on: Teaching in the Ambulatory Setting.

Teaching Strategies
Even though the student has received a clerkship orientation, on the first day with the faculty member, orient the student to you and your office. Tell the learner how to learn best in your practice, the time available for each patient visit. You can continue to see patients while the student is seeing a patient in the time period that you have allotted for the student. In general, students should be able to see 3-4 ambulatory patients in a four hour session.

Teaching History-Taking Skills
Since 80% of all diagnoses are made based on information from patient history, assist students in acquiring this skill. Observe the student interviewing the patient, during part or all of an interview. Take one minute to tell them one thing that he or she did well and one area in which he or she can improve.

Teaching Physical Examination Skills
Most students feel least confident in their physical examination skills. In order to help students acquire these skills: Demonstrate proper techniques. When an exam technique is modified, explain why. For example, if a patient has difficulty with mobility, the physician may choose to examine the heart and lungs while the patient is clothed and sitting in a wheelchair because the exam table cannot safely support the patient’s weight.

Patient Notes
Students need to learn how to write notes. Even if the note is not going to be included in the patient’s chart, have them write it as an educational exercise and allow them to compare it your note. If possible, try to include the student’s note, as it makes them feel that their work is “valued.”

*Adapted from The Clinical Teaching Handbook, second edition, Ohio State University Handbook, 2007