Getting more medical students to say, "Yes, Yes, Yes" to Rehab
Our experiences with using the AAP PM&R Student Fair Grant to help raise awareness about rehabilitation medicine among medical students

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Despite the specialty's longstanding history, many medical schools still offer their students little to no exposure to PM&R. At Mount Sinai, many attendings in Rehabilitation Medicine participate in the Art and Science of Medicine courses for 1st and 2nd year students, which focus on clinical skill building. Students in their small groups may be opportune enough to learn about the field from them. Yet, our school only produces a yearly average of ~2 applicants in the field possibly because the majority of students do not have the opportunity to know of the specialty early enough to plan rotations or participate in PM&R research.

I was fortunate enough to be exposed early to PM&R and be able to present my findings at the 2015 AAP conference at San Antonio. While I was there, I learnt of the AAP’s PM&R Student Fair Grant and applied for it as soon as I returned home. I was lucky enough be accepted as one of the recipients and funding arrived within a few weeks. The Rehabilitation Medicine department at Mount Sinai mobilized instantly and helped organize a week of daily educational events at Mount Sinai. Thankfully, it was a huge success!

The week’s agenda was as follows:
Monday: An information session on Brain Injury Rehabilitation. Members of the Brain Injury Model Systems were also at hand to discuss research opportunities in our department for interested students.

Tuesday: A hands-on workshop on use of ultrasound in the diagnosis & treatment of common sports/musculoskeletal injuries led by one of the senior residents.

Wednesday: A roundtable Q&A with several Rehabilitation Medicine physicians, who discussed the various PM&R subspecialty training and career planning.

Thursday: A lecture on interventional rehabilitation and pain management from a PM&R perspective as well as a visit to the fluoroscopy suite for interested students.

Friday: A therapist led interactive hands-on session showcasing the equipment and strategies used in different therapies. Students had the chance to try experience several types of prosthetics and orthotics, wheelchairs, exoskeletons, assistive devices, speech/swallow tests and cognitive tests.
Students who attended the sessions were provided lunch. Feedback was elicited by asking students to complete pre-and post-session surveys for a chance to win a Starbucks gift card. Our main target audience and resulting attendees were mostly 1st/2nd year students. It is a wonderful opportunity to get students interested in PM&R before they start considering their specialty choices as a 3rd year. This also allows them to plan electives and participate in research, and even have the possibility of presenting at Rehabilitation Medicine conferences.

By the end of the week, a number of 1st and 2nd year students signed up to shadow or rotate through our program and to engage in PM&R research. This truly raises our hopes that we will see a more robust interest in PM&R in our upcoming graduating classes. This was an incredibly exciting experience for all of us involved and hopefully more programs will take advantage of such opportunities to promote further growth of what we all know is a truly amazing specialty!