

ABSTRACT: 2015 ELAM Institutional Action Project Poster Symposium

Project Title: Developing a transformative strategy for supporting clinician-scientist faculty

Name and Institution: Lorelei Lingard, PhD, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University, Canada

Mentors & Collaborators: Michael Strong, Margaret Steele, Jim Lewis, John Yoo, Peter Zhang

Background, Challenge or Opportunity: Clinician-scientists play an integral role in the healthcare system. However, their numbers are decreasing, creating international debate about how to ensure their survival and success in academic health sciences centres. This debate has tended to focus on how clinician-scientists are *trained*; little attention has been paid to how they are best supported as faculty. This issue requires careful scrutiny, because clinician-scientists are most likely to abandon their research aspirations in their early years of faculty appointment.

Purpose/Objectives: To provide an evidence-base on which to develop a strategy for improved organizational support of clinician-scientist faculty at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

Methods/Approach: This project has two stages. First, a scoping review was used to identify current approaches to the support of clinician-scientists and identify gaps in existing knowledge. Second, key informants were interviewed to probe issues not fully represented in the literature.

Results to date: A librarian-supported search of 4 databases yielded 1275 publications related to the main concepts -- *clinician-scientist, new faculty, support* – and keyword variants. Following preliminary review, 28 publications met inclusion criteria: they evaluated existing support strategies, or they explored existing problems and were highly cited. These included 14 editorials, 12 research articles, 1 review article and 2 letters. Analysis identified 13 organizational support strategies in four categories: Value the role; Foster community; Minimize financial barriers; and Facilitate mentorship. Two categories of individual strategies were also identified: Refine research skills and Foster professional skills. Gaps identified in the review included the lack of empirical research and metrics to evaluate these strategies and a paucity of attention to the conditions influencing success or failure of recommended strategies. A salient instance of the latter is the implication in many articles that structural dilemmas – e.g., clinician scientist positions in which the 50/50% description of the role is not achievable due to clinical service demands – contribute significantly to clinician-scientist attrition. Finally, the review identified a unanswered questions requiring further research, such as ‘what is the most effective balance of research and clinical duties in the clinician-scientist faculty role?’

IRB ethics approval to conduct key informant interviews was secured in March 2015; interviews are underway. Key informants are opinion leaders who have: developed models for faculty support; informed the international debate regarding clinician scientist development; or experienced the clinician-scientist role in multiple settings. Participants are asked to reflect critically on existing strategies and to describe innovative strategies not represented in the literature.

Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy: This work will result in a menu of strategies, from the conservative to the innovative, for supporting clinician-scientist faculty. This menu is intended as an evidence-base to support the development of a transformative strategy for supporting clinician-scientists at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.