

# Addressing the Crisis: Engaging and Supporting Academic Clinicians in Research

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**Background:** With increasing clinical pressures and competition for more limited funding, there is a notable declining trend of clinical research at academic centers, linked in large part due to a decline of physicians engaged in research. McGovern Medical School (MMS) is based in a large city with a large patient base which presents opportunities for increasing clinical and translational research. MMS is also 1 of 6 schools that make up the University of Texas Health Science Center.

**Objectives:** This study addresses this issue locally within the McGovern Medical School

1. To identify barriers and opportunities to conducting research by clinical departments
2. To analyze the effects associated with recruitment of research-oriented departmental leaders within clinical department
3. To propose strategic means to cultivate clinical research and to support recruited physician-scientists

**Approach and Evaluation Strategy:** Several approaches were undertaken. First, research leaders (n=5) at the medical school and institution were interviewed to obtain an understanding of the culture, barriers and opportunities to research unique to MMS. We also interviewed the chairs and key faculty with perspective on the changes associated with the new chairs within Anesthesiology and Neurology Department. We reviewed NIH funding effects on these changes. Finally, based on these analyses, 3 initiatives are proposed.

## Table 1. Named Barriers to Research

- Culture of rewarding clinical productivity
- Lack of accountability
- Limited departmental infrastructure
- Lack of mentorship and support of junior physician-scientist

## Table 2. Named Opportunities for Research

Multiple resources spread throughout the health science center:

- Clinical and Translational Science Award Program
- Office of Sponsored Projects
- Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects
- Clinical Research Unit
- Clinical Trials Resource Center

Several established research training programs:

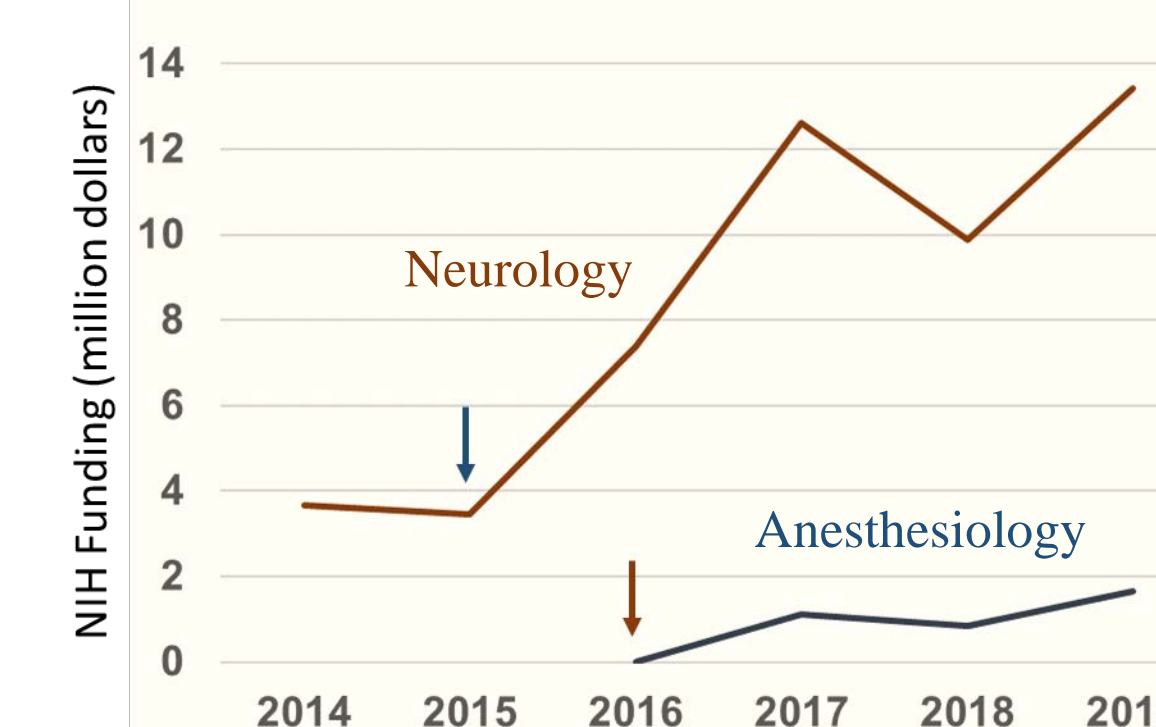
- Grants 101 and 102
- Clinical Research Curriculum
- C-STEP

Diverse medical student body

## Table 3. Effect of New Research Funded Chair

- Reset expectations for faculty
- Serve by example - mentorship
- Intradepartmental seed grants
- More structure around academic time
- Clinical research group to vet projects

NIH Funding within Clinical Departments that Recruited Funded Department Chairs



**Fig 1. NIH Funded Chairs Support Culture of Research.** Total NIH dollars per year from Anesthesiology and Neurology departments. The arrow denotes start date of new department chair. Source Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research

## Proposals

1. Recruitment of Research Focused Clinical Chairs/Leaders
2. Establish a physician-scientist career development program
3. Organize a

2021 McGovern Medical School

**CLINICAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM**

**Discussion:** Evaluation through interviews with research leaders provided a perspective on the research culture and needs at MMS. In addition, the interviews highlighted numerous resources and research programs offered by different offices already available at the school and institution, but not necessarily well publicized or coordinated. Clinical departments that recruited an NIH-funded department chair revealed cultural and structural changes that successfully strengthened research endeavors. Based on this in-depth analysis, 3 proposals are brought forth. One proposal is to support strategic ongoing recruitment of research funded clinical chairs. An immediate initiative is the organization of a Clinical Research Symposium. Finally, another proposal is the creation of a career development program for junior physician-scientist.

**Summary:** After a local review at MMS, MMS is poised to enhance its research endeavors. Several proposals are brought forth with the organization of a Clinical Research Symposium being the most immediate. Taken together, these strategies will support both clinical and basic science research from clinical departments. Funding will be followed as an indicator of the effect of these various programs.