

TRANSITIONS IN CARE: TEACHING ADULT CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE TO CARDIOLOGY FELLOWS IN AN ADULT CARDIOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM

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Background: In the United States, there are approximately one million patients with adult congenital heart disease (ACHD). Care for these patients is often suboptimal, as pediatric cardiologists have no formal training in medical disease management in the adult, and adult cardiologists typically receive limited training on congenital heart defects. In a 2008 survey of adult cardiology training programs, more than half of the programs reported seeing fewer than fifteen ACHD patients per month.

Objectives: Due to the inadequate exposure to the increasing population of patients with ACHD in our adult and pediatric cardiology training programs, we developed a one-month rotation for adult and pediatric cardiology fellows. The one-month rotation includes supervised practice and training with adult and pediatric cardiology faculty in the outpatient setting, where typically 100-120 patients are evaluated and followed monthly. In addition, fellows learn to read 80-90 ACHD echocardiography studies per month and to consult on the inpatient ACHD service. The fellows' experience includes exposure to patients with moderate and complex congenital heart defects, genetics, associated defects and surgical management.

Methods: We have collected anonymous evaluations from all trainees rotating on the ACHD service in the time period 2005-2010. This rotation evaluation consists of five questions, using a Likert scale to rate each response, with an opportunity to type comments, as follows:

Questions:

1. What was your overall assessment of this rotation?
2. How would you rate the level of supervision and instruction provided by the attending physician during this rotation?
3. How would you rate the overall quality of clinical material available?
4. How would you rate the degree of independence permitted during this rotation?
5. What changes would you suggest to improve the quality of this rotation?

Rating Scale:

Very Poor (1) Poor (2) Fair (3) Good (4) Excellent (5) or N/A

Results:

Mean: 4.80 ± 0.4614

Sample comments by fellows:

“... having the flexibility to go to the cath lab, the echo lab, round with the pediatrics team, or attend one of the conferences was also very nice.”

“This was a great rotation and I wish there was more time to learn about pediatric cardiology and adult congenital heart disease.”

“Working with Drs ... is always high yield education due to the vast clinical and teaching experience. I'm glad we at least have a whole month for this rotation instead of only two weeks like it used to be.”

“This is the best rotation in terms of learning/time ratio. Drs. ... are both talented and dedicated teachers. In clinic, uniquely interesting physical exams on the congenital patients allow fellows to refine their skills. Echos also contain unique pathology and reinforce principles of Doppler physiology.”

"This was my favorite rotation of my first 2 years of fellowship. It should be mandatory for every fellow."

"Great rotation with good volume of ACHD cases."

Implications: In conclusion, the ACHD rotation has not only surpassed the requirements for board eligibility regarding knowledge in ACHD, but has met the high satisfaction of our fellows. Most notably, such training has provided necessary training to adult cardiovascular trainees to be prepared for the challenges in the transitions of care of pediatric patients with congenital heart disease into adulthood.