

2005/06
Mentored Clinical Casebook Project (MCCP)
Student Information, September 2006

The Mentored Clinical Casebook Project (MCCP) is a year-long course in which a student is paired with a clinical mentor and follows a single patient through the course of an academic year. The student begins by meeting the patient with the Mentor and learning the patient's history and medical problems. Over the year, the student will refine an understanding of the patient's history and explore the basic science and clinical science underlying the patient's principle illness(es). In addition, the student will explore the social and psychological issues that impact on the patient's health and well-being, as well as to reflect on his or her own experiences, and responses to the patient and the illness. The culmination of this work is to write a casebook in which the issues above are explored in depth.

In addition to the student's principal clinical mentor, there are other faculty members who are involved in the MCCP. Project Advisors, for example, meet every 4-6 weeks with groups of three students. These meetings allow small groups of students to share their ideas, and provide additional faculty guidance in drafting the casebooks. Project Advisors may also suggest other specialists with expertise specific to the case, who can be an additional resource as the student begins to delve into the subject matter.

In brief, the goals of the casebook are to:

- Enable students to understand the extraordinary complexity of a patient's health care life.
- See the patient as a whole person, and not as a disease, in order to make patient-centered decisions.
- Give students an initial self-directed learning experience so they can learn how to learn.
- Develop mentor-student relationships.
- Develop self-reflection skills.
- Efficiently integrate and organize all of this through writing.

This course will introduce the student to the profession; to the role of being a care giver, a role that demands a change in social orientation, which is difficult for everyone. Faculty in this course will help to support the students as they explore and generate their own style of learning, which will provide a foundation for them as they move forward into their professional lives.

In its first two years, the course has been a tremendously successful endeavor, both from the students' and faculty perspectives, as evidenced by the following comments:

First year student: *This has been an extremely rewarding project – among other things, it’s put a human face on the science and medicine that we’re learning in the classroom. ...I can say with some certainty that I’ll look back on this project as the most important part of my education this year.*

First year student: *...although I learned much about the anatomical, physiological, and pharmacological principles underlying ADPKD, dialysis, and renal transplantation, I learned even more about the patient’s experience living with this disease and undergoing these therapies...I received a...multidimensional view of the patient experience, observing how disease and treatment affect the patient physically, emotionally, socially, familiarly, and economically. This project has been extremely valuable, as it has provided me with a very patient-centered experience...I firmly believe... that this experience will stay with me as I continue my training and start to practice, helping me to never forget what it is like to be a patient.*

First year student: *This was a very rewarding project in tying together the various aspects of medical education – learning to relate to patients, to communicate, to search for current research literature and weigh its applicability and quality, to meet regularly with faculty, etc.*

First year student: *I loved this project – my patient was incredible, my mentor was fantastic, and I think this is the most important thing I’ve done all year.*

First year student: *Loved this course and would highly recommend it to other students. I’d like to keep doing this all four years in some type of format. (It was) an invaluable piece of my first year learning. I felt that the project advising groups were a great source of support and reflection in what was at times a difficult and at others a very exciting, rewarding process.*

First year student: *I thought this was an amazing experience that every first year student should have!!*

Mentor (Neurologist): *This experience has refreshed my own sense of wonder about medicine and neurology as well. Thanks.*

Project Advisor (Neurobiologist): *Earlier this week I completed reading my students’ casebooks. It was one of the most positive experiences that I’ve had at Harvard Medical School. It was clear that students enjoyed and valued the program and that they all grew significantly as a result...In sum, an unqualified success. I thank you for the privilege of having been permitted to participate.*

Faculty Casebook Reviewer (Endocrinologist): *This is a constructive exercise to integrate science and the practice of medicine at an early stage in a student’s career. The willingness of physicians to relate their experiences and emotional reactions with the student is impressive, useful and “demystifying”.*