What to Expect in your Internal Medicine Rotation: Webinar Q&A

What are some Internal Medicine Rotation-specific challenges that you’ve seen medical students face?

There are many. Especially early on in the clerkship year, students often struggle with the transition from graduate student to physician. They often ask the wrong question about simple things. For instance, “Can I go to a lecture this evening?” just asking permission is something I see a medical student doing. A clinician would say “I have taken care of all of my patients, everything is tucked in. There is something I would like to learn and I plan to come back after the lecture to make sure my patients are still okay” Clinicians understand their actions have an impact on others, their team, and they take responsibility for it. Another thing students struggle with in the clerkship year as a whole is some of them get so caught up with the shelf exam and competing with each other, they forget how wonderful clinical medicine is and miss out on the amazing things their team is doing. My advice is to stop and smell the roses. It is a wonderful thing to become a physician. Enjoy the process and you will always remember your experiences during your internal medicine clerkship. Work hard, roll up your sleeves, and get in there.

How important is it to figure out what specialty to pursue as soon as we start rotations?

It is not important at all. It is better to focus on general knowledge and let subspecialty thoughts and plans come in later. At least in internal medicine, residency is designed to create general internists. It is best to keep an open mind, because things can change too. I had a student who asked me for a letter in June for surgery residency. He came back in September and he changed his mind and needed a new letter for psychiatry. Sometimes things will happen along the way that will change your mind about what to do and that happens more often than not. Additionally, when you are on each clerkship you should immerse yourself as if you were a member of that specialty. That way you will get the most out of each clerkship. With internal medicine, even if you know you want to be a cardiologist, don’t only look for cardiac cases because you will miss out on the things you need to learn.

How do you ask a resident/attending to write a case report?

If you identify a case or someone says “Wow that’s an interesting case” then don’t be afraid to ask “Can we write this as a case report?” I encourage students to approach their clerkship director if no one else wants to write up the case report. Don’t be afraid to ask that question of anybody. If you decide to write a case report, invite your team, resident, and attending to help make it better and provide input. When you’re ready to submit it as a clinical vignette, you should take a look at the NYACP.org student page where you can find a recent webinar on information on how to submit that case report to the NYACP.

What characteristics should an ideal medical student show?

Enthusiasm for everything stated in the webinar. The best starting place is the professionalism slides in the webinar. Make sure to also commit to making your fellow students shine. You’ve all heard the term “gunner” and that is really one where a student is trying to get all the attention. You can be enthusiastic about medicine, but you can also be enthusiastic about how great your fellow colleagues are and that is just as important.