
Clinical Scholars in Residence Program:

A beneficial experience for surgical residents and the ACS

by Karl Bilimoria, MD, MS; and Clifford Y. Ko, MD, MS, MSHS

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) is now accepting applications for the 2013–2015 Clinical Scholar in Residence positions. The Clinical Scholars in Residence Program is a two-year on-site fellowship in surgical outcomes research, health services research, and health care policy. The program was initiated in 2006 for the purpose of advancing the College's quality improvement initiatives and to offer opportunities for residents to work on the ACS' quality improvement programs. More specifically, Clinical Scholars perform research relevant to ongoing projects in the ACS Division of Research and Optimal Patient Care.

About the program

The primary objective of the fellowship is to address issues in health care quality, health policy, and patient safety, with the goal of helping the Clinical Scholar in Residence prepare for a research career in academic surgery. The ACS Clinical Scholars have worked on projects and research within the ACS National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP®), the National Cancer Data Base, the National Trauma Data Bank®, guideline development, and accreditation programs. Scholars are assigned to the appropriate group within the ACS based on their interests and the College's needs.

In addition, participants earn a

master's degree in health services and outcomes research or health care quality and patient safety during their two years at ACS headquarters in Chicago, IL. The goal of this aspect of the program is to educate clinicians to become effective health services and outcomes researchers. The health services and outcomes research curriculum focuses on these issues within institutional and health care delivery systems, as well as in the external environment that shapes health policy centered on quality and safety issues. The program takes approximately two years to complete. All coursework is done at Northwestern University's downtown Chicago campus, one block from the ACS headquarters. The ACS also offers a variety of educational programs that Clinical Scholars may benefit from, including an Outcomes Research Course, the Young Surgical Investigators Course, and the Clinical Trials Course.

The ACS assigns internal mentors to meet regularly with each Clinical Scholar. Scholars also have opportunities to interact with various surgeons who are affiliated with the ACS and the Division of Research and Optimal Patient Care. Whereas mentorship is one of the most important aspects of the fellowship, having guidance from multiple individuals from diverse backgrounds will provide the best opportunity for success.

In addition, a core of ACS staff statisticians and project analysts serve as invaluable resources to the Clinical Scholars in Residence.

Past successes

Since its inception, surgical residents from throughout the U.S., including California, Connecticut, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, and Ohio, have participated in the Clinical Scholars program. These individuals say that they have had excellent, productive experiences that have been useful in launching their careers in the field of academic surgery. With five scholars having already completed the program and three scholars currently participating, the residents have demonstrated great dedication to outcomes research and the improvement of the quality of surgical care.

The ACS Clinical Scholars have presented their findings at numerous national meeting presentations and in high-impact, peer-reviewed publications, in addition to having contributed a great deal to the ACS quality improvement programs. Furthermore, scholars have gone on to gain prestigious fellowships in several fields, including surgical oncology and pediatric surgery.

Apply now

The 2013–2015 scholars will begin their work July 1, 2013. Applications for these positions

are due by **March 15, 2012**. Currently, applicants are required to have funding from their institution or another grant mechanism, although support through the ACS may become available in the future.

For more information about

the program and the application requirements, go to www.facs.org/ropc/clinicalscholars.html, or send an e-mail to clinicalscholars@facs.org.

Dr. Bilimoria is a surgical oncologist and director of the Surgical Outcomes and

Quality Improvement Research Center at the Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL. He is also an ACS faculty scholar.

Dr. Ko is the Director of the ACS Division of Research and Optimal Patient Care, Chicago, IL.