



Chief's Corner: Academic Chief Update

Michael Eby, MD, Christina Nypaver, MD, and William Ryan, MD



Time continues to pass quickly as another academic year has come and gone. We are honored to have served as the academic chiefs for the 2020-2021 tenure. First and foremost, we would like to express our utmost gratitude to Drs. Levin, Farber, and Moretti for their steadfast support and leadership throughout this year. It has certainly been a unique year as we continue to face the challenges and unforeseen obstacles associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We would also like to thank the faculty, staff, and our co-residents for their continued hard work and dedication to education albeit living and working in tougher times. Despite the barriers associated with the pandemic, our residency program was still able to pursue and successfully achieve formative changes to our educational curriculum, expand and improve upon our virtual/social media presence, as well as continue the robust visiting professor curriculum from afar.

At the start of the academic year, our daily operations appeared to be back up and running at a near normal pace after an unusual and unprecedented pause in clinical activities in the spring. The addition of new residents from Hahnemann the previous year promoted the implementation of new, desired rotations to the educational curriculum for the residents. Noteworthy additions included a fundamental hand rotation with Drs. Gray and Liu, a supplemental foot and ankle rotation for the more senior residents, as well as an elective rotation for the chief resident class, allowing them to pursue opportunities and experiences in the subspecialty of their choosing.

We became more closely integrated with our colleagues in the Plastic Surgery Department, remodeling our hand call schedule so that both plastic and orthopaedic surgery residents have the opportunity to work and operate with their counterpart residents and faculty. We hope to continue and flourish this working relationship as we value teamwork and educational opportunities from varied perspectives.

The resident education program and Grand Rounds curriculum were also revamped this year and implemented at the start of 2021. Each subspecialty now has dedicated time for conference during the week where faculty, fellows, and residents rotating on that subspecialty engage, debate, and discuss topics in a more intimate and influential environment. These can be in the form of formal lectures, journal clubs, indications conference, or fracture conference and complements what is learned clinically during the rotation. These are supplemented by weekly subspecialty specific, and occasionally multidisciplinary, interactive Grand Rounds lectures which are given by the faculty.

“Fireside chats” or weekly fracture of the night conference continued with our Trauma faculty Drs. Mehta and Donegan, which impressively expanded on the national scale through the Orthopaedic Trauma Association, where residents and fellows interact with Orthopaedic Trauma faculty around the country.

Formal Grand Rounds with visiting professors and Quality Improvement Conference continues to take place on a monthly basis. Indeed, our expansive visiting professor curriculum continued albeit taking place virtually, with national and international leaders in the field giving lectures to and educating the department. We were delighted and honored to have each of these esteemed speakers provide us with thought-provoking and stimulating lectures as experts of their craft. We look forward to a time where we can once again welcome and host our guest speakers and colleagues in person.

It is certainly difficult not to discuss the elephant in the room – the COVID-19 pandemic took its toll on the program, the department, and all of us, as it did to the rest of the world, compelling us to adapt to this new “normal”. We are extremely grateful to be in a position where our own careers and livelihoods have been protected during these troubling times where others have not been as fortunate. The introduction of a vaccine which was offered to the department around the Holidays provided new hope that we can return to a state of normalcy once again. We are beginning to reintroduce our cherished in-person cadaver sessions in the Penn Human Tissue Lab and subintern rotations for interested medical students. We also eagerly await the return of international orthopaedic work opportunities and in-person residency interviews this coming year (hopefully) as done in years past.

As our time as academic chief residents comes to a close, we would like to personally thank all of our co-residents at Penn for their enduring dedication, hard work, and perseverance. We would also like to express our sincerest gratitude to our program leadership and faculty who have served as excellent mentors and teachers these past five (plus) years. We wish the best for next year’s chiefs and anticipate exceptional achievements and growth for the program in the future.

Sincerely,

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