

GERIATRICS-FOR-SPECIALISTS INITIATIVE (GSI)

(INCREASING GERIATRICS EXPERTISE IN SURGICAL AND RELATED MEDICAL SPECIALTIES)

Online: <http://www.americangeriatrics.org/specialists/>

Project Overview

Funded by The John A. Hartford Foundation of New York City

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Fall 2008

Before this project was launched in 1994, most efforts to increase the supply of physicians with special skills in the care of older adults focused on family practice, internal medicine, neurology, and psychiatry. Little attention was paid to the surgical and related medical specialties, even though the importance of including geriatrics training in all specialty areas had been called for by many national organizations. To begin addressing this underdeveloped area, The John A. Hartford Foundation of New York (Hartford Foundation) awarded an initial planning grant to the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) in 1992. The successful project that grew out of that seed money, *Increasing Geriatrics Expertise in Surgical and Related Medical Specialties (Geriatrics-for-Specialists)*, entered its fourth funding phase on July 1, 2005, with a \$4.3 million grant that runs through June 30, 2009.

In planning this project, the AGS and the Hartford Foundation were guided by the belief that the most effective way to help all surgical and related medical specialists do a better job of caring for older patients was not to contribute to the further fragmentation of the target specialties by creating geriatric subspecialists. Rather, *Geriatrics-for-Specialists* made a commitment to the following broad objectives, which continue to guide the project today:

Project Objectives

- To improve the amount and quality of geriatric education received by medical and surgical residents.
- To identify and support specialty faculty in promoting geriatric training and research within their own professional disciplines.
- To assist professional certifying bodies and professional societies in improving the ability of their constituencies to care for elderly patients.
- To enhance the knowledge and expertise of practicing surgeons and related medical specialists in the geriatrics aspects of the care of their older patients through maintenance of certification and continuing medical education.

This project was launched at the right moment. Several factors combined to require a concentrated focus on the geriatric aspects of the surgical and related medical specialties. These included the rapid expansion of the older population and particularly the oldest-old segment, the increasing ability of surgeons to operate successfully on older patients, the unique vulnerability of older people under stress, the surgeon's traditional role as the primary responsible physician for surgical patients and, finally, insufficient education regarding geriatrics in medical schools and residencies.

The success of phases I and II of the project was due largely to its deliberately multi-level, "customized" approach, which sought to stimulate geriatrics-related activity among both established leadership and younger "grassroots" faculty in **anesthesiology, emergency medicine, general surgery, gynecology, ophthalmology, orthopaedic surgery, otolaryngology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, thoracic surgery, and urology** through the following key strategies:

- Identification/development of leadership
- Development and/or dissemination of curriculum/training materials
- Support of educational symposia & special interest groups
- Support of resident research seed grants and/or senior investigator awards
- Encouragement for change of Residency Review Committee (RRC) special requirements & Board certifying examinations

In Phase IV, *Geriatrics-for-Specialists* is maintaining and strengthening the successful programs of Phases I, II and III which worked toward long-term collaboration between geriatrics and the specialties, including the following:

- **The Section for Surgical and Related Medical Specialties** presents an annual educational and research meeting in collaboration with the AGS meeting each May. The meetings are designed to enhance the exchange of information between specialists and geriatricians and to disseminate favorable attitudes toward the care of older patients throughout the specialties. Past programs include *The Surgical Patient: Strategies for Improving Outcomes*, *Challenges in the Care of the Geriatric Surgical Patient*, *The Pre-Surgical Evaluation and Management of the Older Patient* and *Surgical Issues in Older Adults: Research Updates from the Specialties and Clinical Case-Based Discussions*, and *Insights into the Difficult World of Surgery for Older Adults*, and *From Bench to Bedside, Adventures in Perioperative Geriatrics*. The 2009 program will be presented on May 2, 2009, in Chicago, IL.

- **Council of the Section** This group, a working unit of national specialty leaders committed to improving care of the geriatric patient was originally formed as the *Interdisciplinary Leadership Group (ILG)* in 1998. In 2000, the ILG issued the *Statement of Principles: Toward Improved Care of Older Patients in Surgical and Medical Specialties*, which has been published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* and in journals of several of the specialties. The ILG has evolved into the Council of a new *Section for Surgical and Related Medical Specialties* in the AGS. The Council meets the day before the Section and provides governance for the Section. Leadership of the Council is in the process of moving into the hands of the specialists.

- **Jahnigen Career Development Scholars Program** These competitive two-year awards of \$75,000 per year (plus a required minimum institutional support of \$25,000 per year) are designed to support education and research training for specialty faculty who seek to launch academic careers in the geriatric aspect of their specialty. These emerging leaders are vital to developing geriatric knowledge and improving geriatrics education in the specialties. Developing such scholars is a continued investment that is critical to the viability of all that has been accomplished to date. For more information, please visit <http://www.americangeriatrics.org/hartford/jahnigen.shtml>. Supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

- **Geriatrics Education for Specialty Residents (GSR) Program**. This initiative provides important opportunities for residency program directors to enrich their curricula through collaborations with geriatricians from their own institutions. This program has been expanded to provide support for 15 programs in years 2009 and 2010. New to the program is an optional mentor program to provide program support. For additional information please visit http://www.americangeriatrics.org/specialists/gsr_program.shtml.

- **New Frontiers in Geriatrics Research: An Agenda for Surgical and Related Medical Specialties – the Research Agenda Setting Process (RASAP)** The research agenda assists faculty in the specialties who have decided to pursue academic careers focused on the geriatric aspects of their specialty by clarifying the state of knowledge at present and pointing out wide-open opportunities for valuable research. A supplement updating developments since 2001 is now available online. The first edition and the supplement of *New Frontiers in Geriatrics Research: An Agenda for Surgical and Related Medical Specialties* are available online at <http://www.americangeriatrics.org/specialists/NewFrontiers/>.

- **Geriatrics Syllabus for Specialists (GSS)** A short, useful guide geared toward surgeons caring for older patients, this publication was designed to provide vital information easily and quickly. Currently not available, an update is under consideration.

- **Discretionary Grants to Specialties** In Phase III participating specialties received grants to support leadership development and educational activities on the national level. In Phase IV, funds for this program will go to support the development of organizational plans for institutionalizing geriatrics within each specialty

- **Clearinghouse for Information** A portion of our website is devoted to establishing a premier resource for geriatric information for surgeons and related medical specialists through posting information about products developed by the specialties as a result of all phases of this project, providing links to material already posted on other organizations' websites, as well as posting the *New Frontiers in Geriatrics Research: An Agenda for Surgical and Related Medical Specialties*, in its entirety. Please visit <http://www.americangeriatrics.org/specialists/>

- **Maintenance of Certification (MOC)** The majority of physicians involved in perioperative care of geriatric patients fall into the category of practitioners. Incorporating geriatrics into MOC programs is a fitting and logical next objective for the initiative given the number of physicians already in practice.

To receive more information about *Geriatrics-for-Specialists*, please contact Janis Eisner, Administrative Director, tel: (212) 308-1414, fax: (212) 832-8646 email: jeisner@americangeriatrics.org



The American Geriatrics Society (AGS), founded in 1942, is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all older adults. The Society supports this mission in many ways through activities in clinical practice, professional education on the clinical care of older people, research, public education and information, public policy effort and by collaborative relationships with other organizations. Visit the AGS website, www.americangeriatrics.org.



Founded in 1929, The John A. Hartford Foundation is a committed champion of health care, training, research and service system innovations that will ensure the well-being and vitality of older adults. Its overall goal is to increase the nation's capacity to provide effective, affordable care to its rapidly increasing older population. Visit the Hartford Foundation website, www.jhartfound.org