Changing the Face of Research: The Diversity Research Training Supplement

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Introduction: Despite the growing proportion of racial ethnic minorities in the U.S population, there continues to be a relative lack of representation of minority nurse researchers. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) diversity research supplement provides training and mentoring to support the development of research careers for minority doctoral students. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how the diversity research supplement provides valuable research experience and professional development for minority doctoral students through the guidance of an accomplished research faculty mentor.

Method: Objectives for the sponsored training developed by the faculty and student included learning the research process and scholarly writing within the area of the student’s research interest area that in turn expanded the parent project of the faculty mentor. The goal of the parent project (R01NR00395) was to explore the impact of explanatory factors including health behaviors on functional limitations, disability, and quality of life for persons with multiple sclerosis (MS) using the disablement process model. The Hispanic student’s research expanded the parent project by examining specific factors that influence participation in breast cancer screening (BCS) as a health behavior of women with MS.

Results: As part of the sponsored training the student was able to conduct a qualitative descriptive study with women with MS regarding barriers and facilitators of BCS, modify and pilot test an instrument measuring beliefs about BCS, develop questions for annual questionnaires for the parent study, assist with data collection and analysis, and participate as a member of a research team generating poster and paper presentations and manuscripts.

Conclusion: The NIH diversity research supplement offers minority doctoral students opportunities to attain valuable research skills, experiences and mentoring to support the transition to becoming an effective independent researcher. Specifically, the student has the unique opportunity to directly apply research knowledge gained in class activities as a contributing member of a research team and develop professional relationships important for the student’s future research career. Faculty mentors benefit from the added unique perspective offered by the student who may become a future colleague and collaborator.