The Long White Coat Ceremony for Residents & Faculty in Family Medicine

**Jacob Bidwell, MD, Mark Robinson, DO, Catherine de Grandville, MD, Esmeralda Santana, C-TAGME, Deborah Simpson, PhD**

### Introduction

- White coat ceremonies (WCC) mark transitions into medicine
- Begins professional identity formation as a physician
- Residency focused WCCs not common

### Methods

- Aurora Health Care Family Medicine Residency Program (FMRP)
- 90-min ceremony highlights core FM specialty values via:
  - Faculty narratives
  - History of the white coat and specialty of FM
  - Concludes with new residents "coated" by mentor

### Results: E Survey & Text Analysis

- **Occurrence**
  - FMRP White Coat Ceremony annual event 2009 to present
- **Participation**
  - New interns, all other residents, faculty (highly encouraged)
  - Attendance increased annually from 30 (2009) to 74 (2014) and 97 (2015)
  - Due to wider audience (clinical staff, hospital and health system leaders)
- **E-Survey**
  - 60% Response Rate (58/97): 41% residents; 24% FM faculty; 27% FM Clinic Staff; 8% other (GME staff, academic/hospital leaders)
  - 79% rated WCC as an "important transition ceremony for our residency program"
  - Perceived as reaffirming FM values for faculty/staff
  - Text analysis of narrative responses regarding what participants valued (35 most frequent used words; larger the word more frequent its use)

### Results: Long Term How to Start WCC

- **Key action steps** for starting residency WCC yielded common features associated with any initiative
  - Requires leaders and champions
  - Advanced planning - schedules, facilities, budget
  - Communication regarding the importance of marking transition events
  - Change management

#### WCC Leaders Recs on How to Start a Residency Focused WCC

- **Culture Change Strategy:** Consider the white coat ceremony as a strategy to reaffirm the values and culture of your specialty, clinic/hospital, and residency program for all team members.

- **Curriculum of Medical Education:** Take advantage of opportunities to reaffirm and reinforce the articulated values and principles:
  - When medical students or other health professions trainees rotate
  - As a referent point when addressing concerns re: professional behavior
  - As core curriculum session/discussion on patient experience
  - During advisor meetings with residents
  - Residency/fellowship graduation ceremonies

- **Dissemination:** Reference your ceremony in recruitment materials, communications with hospital/clinical leaders, and extend invitations to hospital/system leaders and alumni

- **Evolution:** Recognize that the WCC elements and topics will evolve based on formal and information evaluations and program/health care system priorities

### Results: Short Term How to Start WCC

**WCC Leaders Recs on How to Start a Residency Focused WCC**

#### Short Term Action Items

- Identify WCC champions and convene planning group from amongst key program leaders, a friendly chief resident and an administrative staff member
- Identify the tenets/foundations of your specialty, emphasizing what is unique/differentiates your specialty from others

- Book date and facility on calendars; set agenda; confirm presenters (consider pairing it with an existing event)
- Extend invitations to key leaders of your organization/system (and they come)!
- Outline a budget including existing (e.g., white coats) and modest additional costs (e.g., pins, food)
- Start talking about it — with faculty, staff, resident — emphasizing that it’s a solemn and joyful part of your residency program

### Conclusions

- Residency WCC formally marks the transition from medical student to that of the physician
  - Designed to support new residents’ professional identity development by highlighting the history, ideals and values of their chosen specialty
  - Unanticipated outcome: reaffirms faculty physicians’ specialty choice
- WCC elements change over time to reflect the evolving role of family physicians and the needs of the residency program
- Future study is needed on effects of the WCC longitudinally on curriculum, residents’ and faculty physicians’ professional identity development, and role (if any) of age, gender, and ethnicity

**Citation:**