

Understanding the Millennial Physician



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KEYWORDS

- Millennial • Millennial training • Millennial urologist • Millennial surgeon • Millennial residents
- Urology residents • Medical training • Medical education

KEY POINTS

- Unique aspects of the millennial urologist require an understanding of their generation for successful training.
- The special characteristics of the millennial urologist will make their contributions to the medical field important for the progress of urology.
- Understanding what a millennial physician desires in their life and career is essential in being able to recruit and maintain competent millennial urologists.

INTRODUCTION

Training and adapting to a person's unique characteristics are imperative for them to reach their full potential. Whether it be a single new hire or an entire generation, understanding is the first step to achieving this success. A prime example of this idea is represented by the millennial generation. Often misunderstood without others taking the time to understand, the millennial generation holds some of the most potential in the current day workforce. Breakdown based on American Urologic Association numbers identifies more than 25% of today's urology workforce being composed of individuals younger than 45 years.¹ A large portion of this is composed of millennials who currently make up the largest generation in the United States with more than 72 million individuals.² As the millennial population continues to age, the millennial American will often seek out care from those that represent themselves such that more people will begin searching for a millennial physician. By understanding the ideals, skills, and traits of the millennial generation, urology practices can attract these physicians and use all that they have to offer.

Attraction of offers is a key step in hiring the millennial physician. Realizing what they desire and what they require will help keep their interest. As mentioned, millennials are often misunderstood; however, this is not the case. Those same traits that many believe to be destructive are in actuality, the strongest traits that millennials have to offer. Unlocking this potential will help the millennial urologist bud into a strong, successful physician. Using this potential and applying it in their training will help them hone the skills to make change in the field of urology.

Generational identity represents both a person's place in life as well as a community of individuals born at a similar time. These groups typically share characteristics and can define their role of what it means to be American.³ Commonly spanning 15 to 20 years, generations are surrounded by important cultural events. Millennials are commonly noted to have been born between 1981, when Generation X birth rates began to increase, and 1996, when cultural events shifted for a new generation to take place. The Millennial generation has been continuously shaped by key political, social, and economic events in their lifetime.

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Millennial Childhood

Millennials were raised during many tense world conditions (Fig. 1). Millennials graduated and entered the workforce while unemployment rates were at an all-time high.⁴ They faced economic hardship from a young age growing up through the Great Recession of 2007.⁵ Through these hardships though, millennials persevered. College costs were exponentially high yet they continue to be the most educated generation yet.⁶ Many millennials enter urologic practice with significant student debt. More than half of residents have a debt of greater than \$150,000. Surveys found that 24% of graduates enter residency with a debt of \$300,000.⁷

Parents of millennials brought a new definition of family. Typically, with parents born from Generation X, the millennial generation experienced a focus on family. Families took trips together, spent time going out to eat, and more fathers attended births than ever before. Their parents, seen as the “latchkey” and “divorce” generation, brought new maturity to their roles, often with multiple hats serving as caregivers, coaches, and mentors.⁸ Comparatively, many parents of millennials also took on the role of helicopter parenting. Although kids of previous generations had freedom to roam and experience life, parents of millennials kept a stricter watch on their kids. This eventually shaped the values and ideas that millennials hold toward authority and family structure.⁶ Raised by these involved helicopter parents, millennials have been the busiest generation. Involved in activities such as sports, camps, and scouts, a millennial schedule has been micromanaged and occupied at an early age. Pressured with the stresses of a highly structured environment, millennials had little free time, another experience that makes them the way they are today.⁸ Born post-computer revolution, millennials consistently had technology available to them. As digital natives, they appreciate the impact that technology has on their lives.⁹

DISCUSSION

Misunderstandings of the Millennial Perspective

Faced with different outlooks on life, millennials commonly see conflict with older generations. Millennials are perceived as entitled, lazy, need to be hand-held, and disloyal with authority issues.⁶ The older generations who understand the millennial generations often have personal experience, as family or community members, with them.⁶ Crystal Kadakia offers the expression of a 2-sided coin method to better understand and train millennials⁶ (Fig. 2).

Lazy millennials classically are redefining productivity. Millennials see work as an equation. Even though you are putting in time, you may be less productive than those who focus what is required to achieve the goal. Working less hours does not mean work is not done well. It simply shows whether someone is willing to put in the energy for high-quality work. Having seen the classic 9 to 5 work life and the distractions that past generations have faced, millennials have redefined it. Millennials tend to work more efficiently and do not focus on hours at work but more the quality of their work product. Working undistracted for shorter time periods means higher efficiency than a full day’s worth of distracted work.⁶

Seen as an entitled generation, millennials express themselves as entrepreneurial spirits. Classically observed as acting with an “I deserve this” mindset, millennials are driven by their desire to make the most of their potential. When asking for promotion or challenging work, it does not stem from a place of entitlement. It is a statement of wanting contributions professionally that millennials are already familiar with making in their personal lives. A freelance mentality allows for the application of talent and skills that they have honed and perfected their whole lives.⁶

Past generations criticize millennials as needing hand-holding. In actuality millennials desire agility.

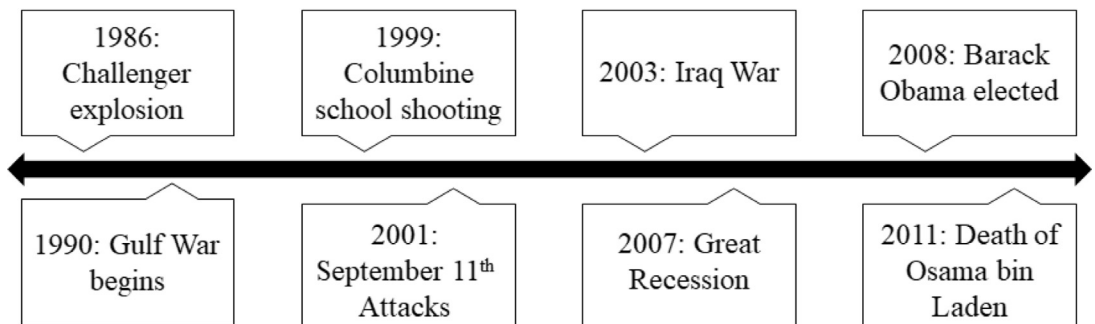


Fig. 1. Key events in their upbringing that have shaped the lives of millennials.

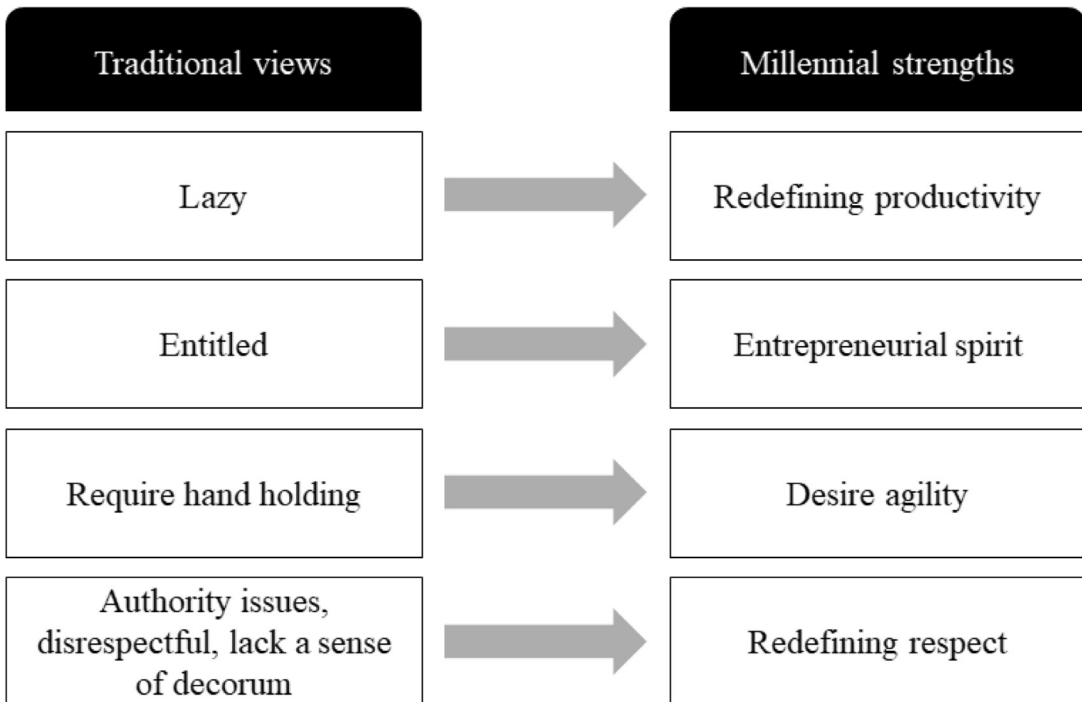


Fig. 2. Traditional views of millennials over camouflage millennial strengths that can serve as assets to any working team. These hidden gems in a 2-sided coin model represent all that a millennial has to offer. (Data from Kadakia C. *The Millennial Myth: Transforming Misunderstanding into Workplace Breakthroughs*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers; 2017.)

Work challenges have expanded faster than the workforce has been able to adapt to, and this creates unique and challenging scenarios placing millennials in difficult situations. Yet, gaining this information quicker and more frequently enforces agility in the working millennial. Millennials expect positive feedback from their contributions. Often seen in a negative light, this request is a way to course-correct, become agile, and succeed with limited resources.⁶

Regarded as a generation of disrespect, authority issues, and a lack of decorum, millennials serve to redefine respect.⁶ From early on, millennials have had close relationships with authority figures in their life in the form of their involved and active parents. This creates relationships without the hierarchy of authority commonly seen in previous generations. Millennials may see their professors as equals and expect them to be approachable and supportive, caring for their growth similar to their parents.¹⁰

The Millennial Medical Student

The training of a millennial physician begins with their medical education. Medical school applications now match the lifestyles that millennials grew up with: strong extracurricular involvement, high achievement in academics, and a major

driving purpose in life. Because parents have typically been involved in their lives and the decisions they make since early on, the millennial generation has become the most accomplished generation to date with more accomplishments on their resumes in high school than previous generations have had in college.¹¹ With almost 80 million millennials competing in America today, numbers alone have encouraged these habits and lifestyles.¹¹

Technology

In medical school, a millennial student expects to continue learning with the technology that they have grown up on. They expect expertise and availability of this technology to enhance their learning and further prepare them for a technologically driven world. With further development of technology and its use in delivery of quality patient care, medical education can use technology to achieve its educational goals. Various simulation technologies can help accomplish these specific goals in areas of team training, critical care or trauma learning, psychomotor skill development, and enhanced decision making. Structured simulation brings together all of these skills in a safe environment and helps team building and team management for the success of both patient and practitioner.¹²

Team-based learning

The increases seen in team-based learning (TBL) environments in medical schools is partially a response to the needs for greater social belonging in the millennial generation. These groups expect to share events, develop team instincts, and form tighter bonds that can improve the delivery of quality care.¹³ Because millennials prefer an effective flexible structure and teamwork, it should not come as a surprise that students prefer a team-based learning strategy for their education.^{6,14} The application and education of this sort of setup, TBL, matches the current practice of medicine as well, with teams of practitioners involved in the care of patients. The early exposure and opportunity of this sort of education provides a unique experience that millennial students may enjoy more than traditional learning. Learning this skill early on, the millennial physician will be able to improve outcomes and help their peers feel invested in their work. Studies have seen that poor teamwork has the potential and ability to not only reduce productivity, but actually damage or harm those involved in the form of burnout or depression.¹⁵

Formative feedback

Formative feedback in medical education will not only encourage but will also help growth and learning. Quick immediate feedback will allow a student to course correct and will help them successfully reach their goal. Contrary to evaluation, feedback comes before this goal is reached and does not represent judgment. Feedback serves its purpose by correcting mistakes before it is too late, reinforcing good performance, and configures clinical competence.¹⁶

The ultimate goal is to improve the student's clinical skills. If feedback is given incorrectly it has the potential to tarnish the relationship between the mentor and student. Feedback should be given from an ally of the trainee such as a mentor or a respected superior. This feedback should be given in an appropriate setting when feedback is expected such as after a procedure or patient encounter. It should be based on experiential data and limited to behaviors that can actually be adapted or improved on. There should be minimal evaluative language, and generalization should be avoided. Subjective data can be appropriate but should be identified upfront. Feedback should focus on concrete decisions and actions rather than interpretations made by one's assessor. Finally, be wary of positive feedback and its relationship with personal praise. Putting these guidelines into practice may take time, but feedback has an important role in clinical education.¹⁶

The Millennial Urology Resident

As generations change, their training and education changes as well. As changes are made to a millennial physician's education beginning with medical school, it continues with their residency and fellowship. Eventually, the attending population will be most of the millennial physicians. With this in mind, one must start the acceptance of their ideas, lifestyles, and characteristics as they begin their residency training. Although it may be difficult, it is important to allow them to share their perspective. Roles may need to be reversed. Typical attending seniority will be enhanced as they take mentorship roles with millennial residents. Allowing these millennials who were trained in medical school with new ideas, technology, and paradigms to share their perspective and guide senior physicians will be important to push forward the future of medicine.¹⁷ Because millennials have grown up with this technology, it is important to encourage senior physicians to be accepting of their ideas and suggestions. Similarly, as attendings teach their residents, they must keep in mind the characteristics of millennials. Millennials may be accustomed to being proficient in this technology. The struggle to adapt plus their natural impatience needs to be matched by attending patience and the opportunity for prolonged training. These ingredients will allow for millennials to become adept in their training.¹¹

The importance of mentorship of the millennial urology resident

Millennials expect mirrored conduct in their attending mentors as they are mastering their skill. This means that the communication and availability should match their own. Being constantly connected through technology and messaging systems their whole lives, millennials expect to be connected this same way with their mentors. They expect fast responses, frequent availability, and short meetings to course correct and remain on task; contrary to traditional mentorship models that involve fewer but longer meetings. These millennials hope to create a team of mentors with this same mentality that are all in their corner. Believing in the power of teams and groupthink, a multidisciplinary team of mentors with different ideals and backgrounds offers the most to a rising millennial physician. As opposed to the traditionally thought of mentorship, millennials are not often bound by hierarchical boundaries. The millennial physician will seek out the most appropriate and beneficial advice, which may mean that they go over one's head or a specific mentor is not used.¹⁷ These relationships should not discourage or upset mentors of other generations; remember that

millennials are not entitled, they are entrepreneurs. They actively seek benefit and are driven by their own potential. As mentors teach and educate millennial physicians, they must keep in mind these driving factors.

Distinctive goals of the millennial urology resident

Millennials do not derive satisfaction from traditional academic success and praise as often as their predecessors did. They often have goals and would get this satisfaction from things such as results of studies or training, implementation of their hardwork, or device and procedure development.¹⁷ In a rapidly advancing field such as urology, millennial residents want implementation and success instead of research and trials. If they feel they have the ability to help right now, they want to put that forth and make the difference. Similar to the way that they were raised, they want to make this difference in the world. This desire can be implemented through multiple interests and avenues. They may have multiple careers and hobbies, one of which happens to be medicine. Some millennials are just now entering residency. Others may be just now beginning to consider medicine as a possible career. These nontraditional students will soon begin their path to becoming a millennial urologist.¹¹ The mentors and program directors of millennial residents need to be open to feedback from their residents. Similarly, to how residents expect respectful, honest, and supportive feedback, it is very much reasonable for programs and attendings to expect the same from their residents. Because of the way they were raised, millennials often have a comfortability with the authority figures in their life. This will benefit open and honest communication in both parties of their training.¹⁰

Education strategies for the millennial urology resident

As the mentorship and relationships develop, millennial education will come to fruition. However, adaptations to traditional educational styles are important for millennial success. Millennials often prefer active learning in forms of interaction, workshops, simulation, and game style presentations. Traditional slide-show presentations without interaction as questions, video, or discussion are easily forgotten or ignored. The addition of slide-show presentations to flipped-classrooms or peer-to-peer teaching can reinforce ideas. Simulation, teamwork, and discussion resemble real-life scenarios and can provide a comfortability in the training of the millennial physician. The presentation of this educational material can vary as

mentioned. However, millennials also expect availability of this material for their own use through accessibility to shared resources for students to learn from and use in their unique ways. Availability through senior residents and attendings is just as important in teaching as text resources are. Inter-generational styles of teaching show value in educating millennials. Senior residents are required to know the material in order to present and answer questions for their junior residents. This team-based system is accurate of a traditional residency hierarchy and ensures that people are competent in their field. This type of presentation can be improved with preassigned learning material in forms of readings, video, or podcasts and then reinforce the information with discussion during allotted time.¹⁸

Millennial urology resident perception of work hours

As residency regulations change, the practicing millennial urologist may adjust their ideal working situation postresidency. When asked how many hours they felt reasonable as an attending physician, most current residents stated between 51 and 60 hours per week. This is in contrast to the new maximum requirements of 80 hours per week residents currently work. Working 51 to 60 hours per week, millennials hope to achieve the work-life balance they so much desire. This work-life desire is also reflected in the amount of call that current residents find reasonable. Most of the residents have stated that a reasonable call schedule would be 2 to 3 nights per month. However, older-generation urologists currently average 5 to 8 nights of call per month.¹⁹ These expectations or desires by millennials are topics of discussion that need to be covered when recruiting new physicians.¹⁹ Professional schedule and decisions need to be discussed but so do personal and livelihood discussions. Benefits will become increasingly important for millennials, especially because they focus on their families and starting their lives. College costs have gone up year after year. With loan payback often needing to be done from undergrad and medical school loans, this needs to be considered for offerings and paybacks when recruiting the millennial.⁶ Family focus needs to be heavily considered as well with items such as vacation, insurance benefits, and both maternity or paternity leave. Recruiters need to have a family mindset to appeal to the millennial urologist.

Millennial Burnout

Even with all the benefits and covered assets, urology burnout is inevitable. Urology has been noted

as one of the top 5 specialties facing the highest burnout. More than half of urologists reported that they have experienced it. Currently, the generation with the greatest levels is Generation X. These doctors are trying to balance their established family lives, figure out their career trajectory, and continue planning and staying on track for retirement. This needs to be addressed, however, because these are the same problems that millennials will face in a few years' time. These millennials said that bureaucratic tasks such as charting or paperwork have contributed the most to their current and future burnout. Up to 77% of millennials have stated that this burnout has had an impact on their relationships. Coming out of an already stressful time for relationships in residency, the newly practicing millennial physician will be hit again with these threats as a practicing physician. Millennials have stated that this culmination of burnout has affected their spouses, partners, and families—all things that are very important to the millennial. More women have reported this burnout than men: up to 48% of women compared with 37% of men. Because more and more women are entering urology, this needs to be focused on to limit the detrimental effects. To cope with these feelings, 45% of physicians said they isolate themselves from others. This type of approach has a negative impact on a team-focused residency program as well as the team aspects of medicine, potentially placing patients at risk.²⁰

In order to combat this burnout, committees have made efforts to promote wellness. The ACGME Council of Review Committee Residents has identified necessary tactics to combat physician burnout. Firstly, one must promote faculty and peer mentorship to enhance relationship and communication. Secondly, a supportive culture must be established, allowing for comfortability in a safe space. Thirdly, efforts must be made to destigmatize depression and recognize that burnout is occurring. Finally, programs need to create avenues to identify these depressive thoughts and allow physicians to get access to confidential resources that they need. Individual wellness committees in practices can assist in the development of physician wellness and elimination of burnout.²¹

How to Best Incorporate the Millennial Urologist into Practice

Utilization of a millennial urologist involves providing them the tools to unlock their full potential. As digital natives, millennials expect the newest technology and the ability to apply and use these tools in their day-to-day work. Technology

plays such a large part in the perception that a millennial may have about a job that 42% of millennials have said they would quit their position if they were required to work with substandard technology.²² The application and opportunity of technology in urology is ripe for growth and exploration. New technology, in the form of imaging, diagnosis, and surgery or treatment, serves as challenges that millennials are keen on taking on. A new millennial urologist must figure out how to incorporate new imaging modalities into their practice such as fusion biopsy, 7 T MRI, prostate-specific membrane antigen, or PET-computed tomography. As novice physicians, they must train on newer technology such as single port robotics, high-intensity focused ultrasound, and radiofrequency ablation with few masters to guide them.²³ These millennials not only are interested in this technology, but they believe that technology will change the world.²⁴

Millennials apply this new technology in ways that older generations may not be able to understand. They use the technology to make work more efficient. Their opinions should be a guiding force for developing strategy to gauge and change workplace trends. Based on behavior of millennials, practices can identify and gauge what needs to be changed. Based on millennial contributions, you can decide what needs to be brought forward and updated or discussed.⁶

As years passed, these technological advances began to come quicker and quicker. Starting with the Boomer generation, changes took off and within almost a decade, expectations quickly followed suit.⁶ Now, the need and expectation for one to adapt and succeed almost instantly is a constant stress that millennials have to deal with. The unique ability of millennials to succeed and adapt to changes allows for appropriate adaptation in workforce technology progression as they train.

As these technological advances came, so did advances in knowledge. Knowledge is no longer limited, and the learning takes place at their fingertips.²⁵ Internet sites and databases are now available providing unique and specific medical knowledge to the training physician. The accessibility of these sites and this sort of knowledge to patients however provides a new avenue for a different kind of patient-provider relationship. Millennial physicians will need to work with some of the most well-informed patients and will need to include them and their thoughts in the care plan.²⁶

Key characteristics millennial urologist seek in practice

Millennial urologists want to be challenged, gain new knowledge and skills, and work in a positive

environment.⁸ Often as fresh medical school graduates or brand new attendings, millennial urologists are eager to use or explore the newfound set of skills and privileges that they have just been granted. In order to challenge this population, we must offer the opportunity for them to use those skills and the accompanying technology to solve how they can better treat the patients who need them.²³ As they recently stepped into a field of new and fresh technology and investigation, the ability and opportunity for these millennials to learn and hone these new skills is at the top of their list for criteria in a job. The advances in areas such as immunotherapy, genomics, microbiome, and transplantation all make urology an interesting avenue for millennials to gain this new knowledge and skill.²⁷

Work-life balance

A positive environment encompasses a positive work-life balance for a millennial physician. Millennials desire to work when they want and where they want. They hold the belief that time does not always equal productivity. Remember, they see fewer solid hours of work as more productive and beneficial than a day's worth of half-hearted work. They then hope to use this free time outside of work to spend it with their family or take up hobbies. Attractive positions to millennials involve not only the applicant but their families as well. Offering opportunities such as flexible scheduling or maternity and paternity policies will be more likely to draw a millennial physician just starting out with their new family. These millennials also expect a positive work environment. A toxic work culture has negative effects on employees and subsequently patients. Wellness initiatives should now be expected in physician training.²¹

Potential of millennials

Recognizing the millennial physician and what makes them unique is the first step of having success with millennial physicians. The next step, however, would be to appreciate all that they have to offer. Growing up in a life of technology, they are not afraid of change and are always up for the task of learning new things. They embrace advances and are willing to apply what they know for the betterment of medicine. Their aptitude for technology and desire to grow allows for great contributions in urology. They are also more likely to take these skills and continue to improve via fellowship positions. Millennials in urology are more likely than previous generations to have completed a fellowship. For women and men under 45%, 62.5%, and

54.6% are fellowship trained, respectively. Compare this with 52.1% of women being fellowship trained and 29.4% of men being fellowship trained if they are older than 45 years.¹ With their less formal approach to relationships and mentoring, millennial physicians have the potential to break down barriers in the patient-provider relationship. Millennials are ambitious. They have grown up in families of helicopter parents who have told them they can do anything, and they believe it.

SUMMARY

By recognizing, understanding, and appreciating the millennial physician, they can reach their potential. The proper encouragement and utilization of the millennial physician will create a loyal and driven workforce eager to grow and assist. Do not be discouraged by previous rumors of millennials as all coins have 2 sides. Listen to their requests in what they desire and be open to a different view of life than yours. A millennial's understanding of technology, grasp of patient-provider relationships, and desire to work hard may lead to the greatest generation of urologists.

CLINICS CARE POINTS

- The millennial generation has experienced a unique upbringing providing them qualities to be successful physicians. Their familial, social, and educational background all mesh to form a caring, competent, and driven doctor.
- Media and older generations have often portrayed millennials in a negative light. It is key to not be discouraged by these opinions of millennials, as weaknesses are actually their greatest strengths.
- When adding a millennial urologist to your practice, you must remember what they have to offer and how you can appeal to their likings. Their family focus requires adequate work-life balance, sufficient benefits, and opportunity for growth.
- Fostered from a young age to take on challenges and roles that will provide success, a millennial will expect challenges that can push them in their career, technology to advance patient care, and mentorship to guide them along the correct paths.

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