Poster Session S: Transition  
Saturday, August 6, 2011, 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Predictors of Early Faculty Attrition at the University of Colorado School of Medicine  
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Background:  
Productive faculty members are a medical school’s most critical resource. However, studies suggest that eight-to-ten percent of faculty members resign each year, resulting in a loss of financial and human capital. In this study of new faculty hires, we sought to identify personal and institutional factors associated with early attrition.

Methods:  
We identified a cohort of new faculty hires during a single academic year (2005-2006). Approximately five years after original hire, a 40 question electronic survey was distributed to each faculty member. Survey questions addressed reasons for departure (for faculty members who had resigned), career satisfaction, faculty responsibilities, and institutional and departmental support for teaching, clinical work and research. Departure rates were measured over a three year period from 2006-09. Odds ratios and 95 percent confidence intervals (95CI) were calculated to identify predictors of attrition.

Results:  
A total of 139 faculty members with doctoral degrees were hired in 2005-06. When the survey was administered in 2010, 92 faculty members (66%, 95CI = 58, 74) were still active, and 47 (39%; 95CI = 26, 42) had resigned. Among the 92 still-active faculty members, 60 (65%) participated in the survey and of the 47 who had terminated, 17 (36%) participated. The strongest predictors of resignation within five years were: extensive (> 50% of time) involvement in clinical care (OR=3.93; CI95: 1.29, 11.93); lack of interest by the chair in the faculty’s professional development (OR 3.84; CI95: 1.25, 11.81); lack of feedback regarding academic progress (OR 2.33; CI95: 0.76, 7.15); absence of “academic community” in the faculty member’s department (OR 2.33; CI95: 0.77, 7.10); and lack of institutional recognition and support for excellence in teaching (OR 2.96; CI95: 0.78, 11.19) and clinical care (OR 3.87; CI95: 1.04, 14.41). Active and terminated faculty members did not differ with respect to gender, race, Hispanic ethnicity, department type (clinical or basic science), tenure status at time of hire, membership in a clinical or research center, or percentage of time devoted to research. Among the still-active faculty, 26 (47%, 95CI: 35, 60) will seriously consider resigning within the next five years. 13 (50%, 95CI: 32, 68) of these stated that they will leave because of inadequate salary support.

Conclusions:  
Faculty members are a valuable institutional resource, given the financial resources, time, and training that medical schools expend in order to recruit them. In this institution, 39% of new faculty hires had resigned within five years and almost half of the active faculty members were seriously considering leaving in the next five years. The most “endangered” faculty were those heavily involved in clinical work, who did not sense that teaching excellence and clinical service were rewarded adequately, and who did not receive adequate feedback and career
support from their chairs. Greater awareness of early attrition rates and factors associated with attrition may help medical schools to identify threats to faculty career satisfaction and strengthen faculty development, retention, and institutional loyalty.