Building a cadre of minority scientists in the area of Childhood obesity prevention: A mentoring initiative

Mary Murimi, PhD, RD

Summary

Methods

- The mentoring program was three pronged that included a pre-conference workshop on designing a research proposal.
- The formation of self-selected mentor mentee groups, and monthly webinars for the whole group for 12 months.
- The individual meetings focused on helping the mentees with their grant proposals or publications, where the mentees came up with the projects and the mentors provided advice. The group wide interactive webinars addressed issues that came from the individual group meetings.

Table. Topics for the preconference workshop

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Results

Eight minority investigators and 5 mentors participated in this mentoring program. The projects undertaken under the mentorship included, revisions of previously rejected grant proposals, publication projects, and review of grant proposals. A systematic review was completed, extension educational materials were prepared and a dossier for tenure was prepared under the guidance of the mentors.

Grants submitted as a result of the workshop:
- Grants were prepared and submitted to USDA NIFA SPECA Challenge grant
- Diversity grant through Robert Wood Johnson and the Academy

Manuscript:
- My mentor provided support for the preparation of a systematic review
- 3 manuscripts that were submitted with other writing teams were accepted for publication
- Submitted an article as the first author to JAND
- Submitted a book chapter on nutrition assessment with a colleague and have been working on revisions with the editors

Research:
Submitted an IRB application to expand the diversity in dietetics research that I completed over the past couple of years with the National Organization of Blacks in Dietetics

Conclusion
The three pronged approach of a workshop, tailored mentoring and group webinars has a broad impact for professional development and promoting diversity in our profession.

Acknowledgements

Mentors: Ellen C. McKnight, Margaret Udahogora, Conchita C. Newman, Veronica Oates, Crystal Wynn, Dreamal Worthen, and Eastern Kang

Manuscript: Valentine Yanchou Njike, Mary Murimi, Lorraine Weatherspoon, Angela Odoms-Young, Tandalayo Kidd, and Joseph R. Sharkey

Objective

The objectives of this initiative were: 1) to mentor early career minority investigators; 2) to develop their research agenda in the areas of childhood obesity; and 3) to increase collaboration in applied, and translational research in childhood obesity arena.

Background

Despite the fact that there is disproportional prevalence of childhood obesity among minority population compared to their majority counterparts, limited federal funding goes to minority investigators compared to their majority counterparts. In an effort to narrow that disparity gap, developing a mentoring program with mentors that have a clear understanding of the obstacles faced by minority scholars is promising. Mentoring offers an opportunity for knowledge exchange and integration, with the mentee investigators sharing their novel ideas and culture, while the mentor provides the technical knowledge, experience, and implementation of a grant project. The reciprocal dynamic relationship between mentor and mentee has the potential to produce a shared vision, healthy outcomes, and resources including funding.

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