

Alpert Foundation awards Brown medical school \$27M

Funds will endow MD/PhD program; create Translational Science professorship

PROVIDENCE — A new \$27 million gift to Brown from The Warren Alpert Foundation will establish an endowment for Brown's program for training MD/PhD students pursuing careers as "physician-scientists," more than tripling funding for the program, and will create the first endowed professorship in the Brown Institute for Translational Science.

Of the total gift, \$22 million will establish the endowed Warren Alpert Physician-Scientist MD/PhD and Advanced Training Program, offering more students the opportunity to pursue these joint degrees with tuition assistance and research stipends.

The gift will also bolster efforts to bring researchers from different fields together to decipher disease and improve population health, one of the seven integrative scholarship themes outlined in the University's Building on Distinction strategic plan.

DR. JACK A. ELIAS, Brown's dean of medicine and biologic sciences and the Frank L. Day Professor of Biology, said that a thriving MD/PhD program is an essential component for medical schools focused on translational science and that the foundation's gift will advance the University's vision to become a world-class center of innovation in biology and medicine.

"MD/PhD physician researchers see patients in the clinic, understand the challenges of the diseases they study and transfer those insights to work in their labs," Elias said.

"These scholars are integral in the research continuum and a critical ingredient for any school to truly excel in translational research."

DR. ALLAN TUNKEL, associate dean for medical education, said that tuition assistance is particularly beneficial for MD/PhD students and will allow Brown to attract exceptional students who have the passion for combining research with clinical medicine. For years, Brown students have wanted more opportunities to engage in this extraordinary level of scholarship, he said.

Bolstering translational science

The gift's additional \$5 million will establish the Warren Alpert Professorship as the first endowed professorship in the Brown Institute for Translational Science (BITS). Established in fall 2015, BITS organizes researchers into integrated teams with a full continuum of expertise – from basic science to medicine to population health and policy – to make breakthroughs on specific diseases and other pressing medical challenges in society.

The new professorship will enable the institute to recruit and support a new faculty member with in-demand expertise integral in translating scientific discoveries into applicable solutions for health issues, a key factor in the institute's plans to assemble fully integrated teams that can attack medical problems from multiple directions. ❖

AMA Adopts New Policies to Support Medical Student and Resident Physician Wellness and Mental Health

ORLANDO – The American Medical Association (AMA) adopted new policy recently aimed at ensuring medical students and resident and fellow physicians have timely and confidential access to the medical and mental health services they need during their medical training. The new policies will help physicians-in-training maintain their personal health and well-being and reduce burnout so they can provide the highest quality patient care.

"Many physicians-in-training do not seek out treatment for physical, mental health or addiction issues because they are concerned about confidentiality, the possible negative impact that receiving treatment could have on their future career in medicine, or burdening colleagues with extra work," said AMA Board Member and medical

student Omar Z. Maniya. "With a high number of medical students and residents experiencing depression, burnout and suicide, and too many physicians overlooking their own health needs, we must do everything we can to reduce the barriers and stigmas that keep them from receiving care."

To help address concerns about confidentiality, the new policy specifically calls on state medical boards to refrain from asking applicants about past history of mental health diagnosis or treatment, and only focus on current impairment by mental illness or addiction, and to accept "safe haven" non-reporting, which would allow physicians-in-training who are receiving mental health treatment to apply for licensure without having to disclose it.

The new policy also encourages

medical schools to create mental health awareness and suicide prevention screening programs that would be available for all medical students at their discretion. The policy asks that these programs offer students anonymity, confidentiality, and protection from administrative action, and provide proactive intervention for any student identified as at-risk by mental health professionals. These policies build on the AMA's strategic work over the past several years to reduce physician burnout and create the medical school of the future. The AMA is committed to ensuring a healthier practice environment for physicians and closing the gaps that exist in medical education to improve the health of the nation. ❖