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Title: Addressing the Needs of First-Generation Medical Students at University of Colorado School of Medicine

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**Introduction:** The non-white physician workforce cares for a disproportionate majority of the underserved populations and increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of this workforce might be critical to challenging the disparities in care these communities face (20). While the United States population has continued to diversify, in many healthcare specialties, the workforce has not kept the same pace of change (9). A major challenge to both recruitment and retention in healthcare can be found within the barriers and inequalities that these populations experience in medical education (13). At the University of Colorado, there are several supports in place that support students underrepresented in medicine, including mentorship programming for those who are first-generation in medicine. This study aims to (1) identify demographic information of mentors and first-generation students (FSGs) and explore mentor-mentee relationship characteristics, (2) assess how FSGs have been utilizing University of Colorado's resources and identify student needs for support and resources, and (3) to design an intervention targeting FGS' needs and help students foster foundational skills related to utilizing mentors and developing mentorship relationships.

**Methods:** The study team sent an initial survey asking first-generation students to describe their needs, areas for support, and existing mentorship relationships to students (N=50). 20 student participants then volunteered for a 1-hour Zoom interview with our research team. Interviews were transcribed by a third-party service, transcripts were coded by team members, and themes were identified by two team members to improve interrater reliability.

**Results:** Results showed that many first-generation students at Colorado found benefits to support systems like mentoring, though they faced challenges as well. Challenges included finding mentors without pre-existing social networks, navigating medical school and culture, finding research opportunities, exploring careers without enough guidance and support, and navigating studying and financial resources.

**Conclusions:** Based on the themes identified, the study team proposes several targeted interventions, including adding informational sessions in-person during first-year medical student orientation that outline common student needs and questions (sessions on medical school structure and clinical roles/expectations of students to help students navigate the medical system and culture, session on career exploration while in school to target mentorship and exploration needs, and session on existing University of Colorado supports and programming to bridge the informational gap and support financial, scholarship, mental health, research, and community needs). These sessions may offer community-building and learning opportunities to improve student understanding, and ultimately, improve their experiences in medical education.