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## Faculty Resources for Educational Excellence

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### Have You Heard of Open Access Publishing?

by **David W. Musick, Ph.D.**, Senior Dean, Faculty Affairs and  
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A growing trend in academia is something known as open access publishing. What exactly is this, and why is it important? The idea behind open access publishing is to make information available sooner and at a lower cost, in order to reach a wider audience when compared to more traditional forms of publishing. And, in many cases, open access publications are free of many copyright and/or licensing restrictions. A benefit to researchers is that they can have access to information via journals to which their own libraries do not subscribe; this is a significant benefit, since no library can subscribe to every scientific journal on the market. And, a benefit to the larger community is that laypersons who are interested in a given topic can more easily gain information via open access platforms. The current primary focus of this approach seems to be peer-reviewed research literature across a wide variety of fields and disciplines (although it certainly applies to other types of publications such as book chapters, monographs, and other types of documents; and even certain types of images). What are the biggest differences between traditional and open access approaches to publishing?

One big difference relates to how publishers cover their costs. Publishers of traditional academic journals are funded through subscriptions, site licenses and advertising revenue. Open access journals cover their costs by other forms of funding, often including fees that must be paid by authors of the published articles. Some open-access journals secure funding through other means such as public resources, philanthropy and various types of sponsorship. So, while not every open access journal requires fees to be paid by the authors who submit their work, many do – and this represents a major shift in how academic work is subsidized and by whom. The range of article processing fees that must be paid by authors is very broad and is likely influenced by the presence or absence of other funding sources for a given journal.

Open access journals may also feature an accelerated peer review process, thus considerably shortening the time it takes to have an article published. Many also may include a “preprint” feature whereby one’s work is made available online prior to, or during, the peer review process. These preprint platforms are popular in some circles, and are consistent with the philosophy that information should be made

readily available in a more rapid and transparent way. However, there is concern that such preprints may increase the likelihood of plagiarism.

Many long-standing and established academic journals are now offering both options to authors: the more traditional way of publishing your work, or an open access approach. These journals are often referred to as “hybrid” journals, because they offer both options. However, over the past decade or so there has been a dramatic increase in the number of completely open access journals. And, unfortunately, there has also been a rise in the number of so-called “predatory” open access journals that will publish almost anything sent to them for a hefty fee. A key feature of any academic journal is peer review of submitted articles; any journal that doesn’t provide rigorous peer review is one to be avoided.

One of the best available resources on open access publishing is the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). This organization sets criteria for high quality open access journals to follow. If you are thinking of submitting your work to an open access journal, it is strongly recommended that you **search the online DOAJ database** and see if the journal is listed there. If it is listed, you can feel more confident that the journal itself is one that meets high standards for open access publishing. Another great resource is the **Virginia Tech Library system**.

On Monday, July 24, 2023, TEACH will offer a Health Professions Educator presentation on open access publishing and how Virginia Tech can support your work in this way. Be watching for this event on your calendars and plan to join us then! In the meantime, if I can provide assistance or further information on this topic, please contact me via **email**.



by **Sarah Harendt**, MS, Manager, Education and Faculty Development

Continuing our series of interviews with the Health Systems Science and

*Interprofessionalism (HSSIP) Clinical Champion cohort participants, Sarah Harendt sat down with **Dr. Sarah Dewitt**, Palliative Medicine and Supportive Care clinician, and assistant professor, Department of Emergency Medicine and Department of Health Systems and Implementation Sciences at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM), to discuss how early integration into undergraduate medical education prepares systems citizens.*

Dr. Dewitt will tell you that advancing her development as a medical educator originally sparked her interest in the Health Systems Science and Interprofessionalism (HSSIP) Clinical Champion Cohort. However, as she learned more about what the cohort experience would entail, the opportunity to incorporate health system science (HSS) into undergraduate medical education (UME) drove her to accept the opportunity. In her conversation with Sarah Harendt, she noted that giving students a structured approach to gain knowledge, rather than expecting them to learn it “on the fly” like she did in residency, was something she wanted to be a part of. She stated, “all the health system science concepts impact the system we work in; whether it's policy, technology, advocacy, [they are] all part of this system we navigate. Each of these domains impact the care that people receive and their overall health outcomes. That's really what drew me in” to accept a position in the inaugural HSSIP Clinical Champions Cohort. In fact, Dr. Dewitt is convinced that “if we can teach individuals about the components of the system earlier, they will be that much further along in navigating the complexity of healthcare.”

When asked where she sees the current generation of medical students positioned in relation to HSS, Dr. Dewitt observes an already strong conceptual grasp of the critical impact of equity and social determinates of health on health outcomes.

With a strong background in healthcare ethics and navigating legal issues within healthcare, Dr. Dewitt considers these HSS domains as areas for educational growth. Teaching about complex ethical cases at the UME level gives learners an opportunity to build a foundation for thinking through, and considering how to, navigate difficult and complex issues in lieu of being thrown into a situation without that foundation.

As a life-long learner, Dr. Dewitt understands the importance of building one's knowledge base in areas that are complimentary to existing subject-matter expertise. While already well versed in the intersection of healthcare ethics and legal issues, as well as practicing medicine as part of an interdisciplinary team, Dr. Dewitt has identified additional areas of interest through the HSSIP Clinical Champion Cohort experience. “I've found that I am very interested in healthcare policy and economics, how both areas impact clinical practice,” and how a deeper understanding of these HSS domains can be utilized to do something that is often a struggle for clinicians: determining paths to “effect change on a systemic level through local, grassroots efforts.” These are the concepts and connections we “should start teaching early in medical education. If we teach learners how to advocate for change now, they will be much further along” as systems thinkers when they transition into residency and beyond.

When asked how she would encourage colleagues who want to learn more about HSS, Dr. Dewitt did not hesitate in recommending that individuals reach out to one of the recent **HSSIP Clinical Champions** to talk through questions they have or to find out how they can get involved in modeling HSS concepts and systems thinking behaviors. She also encouraged utilizing the **AMA's HSS modules** for a quick snapshot of how each of the HSS domains show up within the delivery of quality healthcare.

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