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# Surgery residents recognized less frequently over time by medical students: A twelve year study of the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** There is a decreasing institutional percentage of surgical resident recipients of The Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award over time. The hypothesis was that this trend was a national phenomenon.

**Methods:** This was a retrospective study from 2004 - 2015, utilizing data from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation. Multiple regression was performed using the estimated ratio of eligible surgical to non-surgical residents and the year as explanatory variables, utilizing an  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

**Results:** The percentage of surgical award winners was lower in the second study half compared to the first half (40.2% vs. 47.2%) ( $p = 0.02$ ). Multiple regression showed that when controlling for the number of eligible residents, the number of resident awardees decreased over time ( $p = 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** There is a clear national trend that surgical residents are receiving the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award less over time.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the expectations and assumptions for residents at academic centers is active participation in the teaching of medical students.<sup>1–7</sup> Whereas this has formerly been informally-structured, there has been a heightened awareness of the importance of training more sound medical and surgical educators with curricular interventions and training.<sup>1–4</sup> Additionally, as there not only the important need for teaching clinical medicine and surgical principles to students, but also the need for the dedicated teaching and role-modelling of humanism and compassionate behaviors toward patients, their family members, and students. Humanism is an important aspect of patient care that complements the teaching of medical and surgical clinical knowledge.<sup>8–11</sup> Humanism is defined as the attitudes and actions by a physician that demonstrate interest in and respect for the patient and his or her concerns and values in the psychological, social, and spiritual domains.<sup>8</sup>

As a form of recognition of teaching and humanism, clinically-

rotating medical students are responsible for the conferring of the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award to clinical residents at participating programs.<sup>12</sup> This national award is given through the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, a group that works with healthcare professionals in training and in practice to instill a culture of respect, dignity and compassion for patients and professionals.<sup>13</sup> The award was first given at the end of the 2003–2004 academic year, and its recipients are published on the Arnold P. Gold Foundation website.<sup>12</sup> The Arnold P. Gold Foundation has a number of other programs and awards; some of these programs include the White Coat Ceremony and the Humanism Honor Society.<sup>13</sup> But, residents receive the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award based on their demonstrated commitment to teaching and compassionate treatment of patients, families, and students.<sup>12</sup> Each participating institution has a committee dedicated to this award with its own internal separate ballot and voting system.<sup>14</sup> A recent global study of The Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award showed that eligible residents in obstetrics/gynecology and surgery are recognized much more frequently than non-surgical specialty residents.<sup>14</sup>

One observation from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine is that the percentage of surgical resident award

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recipients at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center has been decreasing over time. This trend is linear, and is shown in Fig. 1 ( $p = 0.001$ ). There were 73 awards presented from 2004 - 2015. A Fisher's exact test of the data showed a decrease in the proportion of surgical residents that won the award in the first half of that time period (89%) compared to the second half of that time period (62%) ( $p = 0.01$ ). These are previously-unpublished results. It is unclear if this is solely an institutional phenomenon or if it represents a national trend.

The teaching of clinical principles and humanism to students is important. This national award may act as a barometer of the medical student clinical experience. Given the importance of the medical student experience in the setting of this clinical observation at a major academic center, the aim of this study is to test whether there are national trends in the nature of award recipients over time. The hypothesis is that the proportion of surgical resident recipients of the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award is decreasing over time.

## 2. Materials and methods

This was a retrospective study from 2004 – 2015. This study was accepted as exempt from the Institutional Review Board. All of the institutions that conferred the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award during each study year were identified through the Arnold P. Gold Foundation website.<sup>12</sup> Institutions with data available for every year of the study were included. This excluded inconsistent programs. Double data entry was performed to ensure accurate data extrapolation. The specialties of award recipients were tabulated, in a similar manner to a previous manuscript.<sup>14</sup> There were some recipients in medical fields that were ultimately not categorizable and were ultimately unknown. A t-

**Table 1**

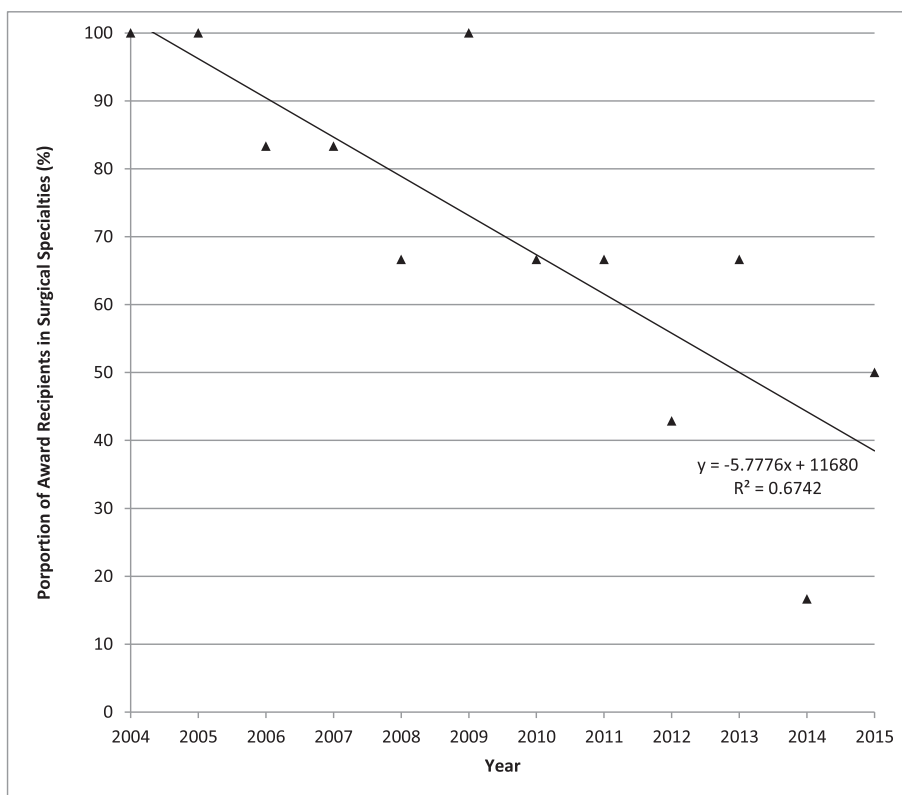
Medical Schools that Satisfied Study Inclusion Criteria.

Columbia University
Drexel University College of Medicine
Jefferson Medical College
Midwestern University Chicago
Mount Sinai School of Medicine
SUNY Upstate Medical University
The Pritzker School of Medicine
University at Buffalo
University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
University of Iowa
University of Louisville School of Medicine
University of Minnesota Medical School
University of Nevada
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
University of Rochester
Wright State University

score statistic was performed to see if a representative sample was utilized for this study.

To evaluate for changes in award reception over time, multiple regression was performed using two independent variables. The first was the proportion of eligible surgical residents to medicine residents. The academic year was the second explanatory variable.

The proportion of eligible surgical and medical residents was estimated. The average number of eligible residents and programs were obtained through the ACGME.<sup>15</sup> These reports were cross-checked for accuracy with the ACGME Data Resource Book.<sup>16</sup> Major residency program listings leading to board certification and defined as members of the GME pipeline were used to define specialties of resident eligibility. As such, the Cardiology winners were omitted ( $n = 2$ ). The “Other Medical Specialties” not



**Fig. 1.** Decreasing Trend in Surgical Specialty Recipients of the Arnold P. Gold Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award from 2004 - 2015 at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

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