

The impact of leadership training programs on physicians in academic medical centers: a systematic review

Summary

Ten studies were included in our systematic review to examine the impact of leadership training programs on physicians in AMCs. Our overall findings indicate that leadership programs can have modest effects on outcomes that are of importance to AMCs. For example, one relatively high quality study demonstrated a positive impact on academic advancement and hospital leadership roles. Similarly, two studies demonstrated that participation in a leadership program had an impact on participants' self-reported knowledge and skills related to relevant topics, like networking, coalition building, and environmental scanning, and success in obtaining grants and publishing papers.

Implications

We concluded that leadership programs have modest effects on outcomes that are important to AMCs. Given AMCs' substantial investment in these programs, rigorous evaluation of their impact is essential. Researchers are also encouraged to make use of qualitative methods, as they can improve our understanding of the aspects of leadership training that are most useful to participants.

Reference: Straus SE, Soobiah C, Levinson W, et al. The impact of leadership training programs on physicians in academic medical centers: a systematic review. *Acad Med.* 2013;88:710-23

PMID: [23524921](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23524921/)

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What is the current situation?

- Faculty members of academic medical centers (AMCs) have the responsibility to train the physicians of the future and many are investing significant resources; both in time and money, to provide faculty with this training.
- Despite the growing interest and the implementation of leadership training programs, little is known about their impact. For example, what types of programs are most effective? What outcomes are they achieving?

What is the objective?

To conduct a systematic review to identify the impact of leadership training programs at academic medical centers (AMCs) on physicians' knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.

How was the review conducted?

- Studies were identified by searching MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL and the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, scanning reference lists, and contacting authors of included studies.
- Studies of any design that reported on the implementation and evaluation of programs for physicians to develop leadership skills (e.g. training initiatives for staff physicians targeting any type of leadership position) were eligible.
- Relevant outcomes included: measures of academic promotion or other physician-level outcomes; such as job satisfaction, retention, absenteeism, leadership positions attained, and self-efficacy.
- Screening and data abstraction were completed by two independent reviewers.
- Methodological quality was assessed using tools for the respective study designs.
- We synthesized the results narratively and identified themes.

What did the review find?

- 142 RCTs with a total of 123,529 patients were included.
- Our literature search yielded 2,310 citations. After screening, 10 unique studies were included, with 636 participants (all staff physicians).
- The leadership programs varied in their components and duration, and included: small-group seminars and workshops, executive coaching, mentorship, and team projects.
- Although all studies were at substantial risk of bias, the highest quality ones showed that leadership training programs affected participants' advancement in academic rank (48% vs. 21%, $P = .005$) and hospital leadership position (30% vs. 9%, $P = .008$) and that participants were more successful in publishing papers (3.5 per year vs. 2.1 per year, $P < .001$) compared with nonparticipants.