

PROFESSION

Mentoring project aims to increase minorities in medicine

■ The website allows students to connect with role models and get the inside word on medical careers from physicians.

By KEVIN B. O'REILLY ([HTTP://WWW.AMEDNEWS.COM/APPS/PBCS.DLL/PERSONALIA?ID=KOREILLY](http://www.amednews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/personalia?id=koreilly)) amednews staff — Posted June 12, 2013

A Web-based mentoring service launched in August 2012 has attracted 400 active users in its effort to help underrepresented minorities pursue careers in medicine.

The project, DiverseMedicine Inc., allows users to request a personal mentor to answer questions through the website's instant messaging or video chat functions. High school, college and medical students also use discussion forums to cover topics such as admissions testing and residency applications.

The need for the service is great, say organizers of the project, which is open to all students online ([link](#)). Seven percent of medical school faculty are black, Hispanic or Native American, says the Assn. of American Medical Colleges. The share of medical students from underrepresented minority groups is about 15%, a figure that has not budged much since 2001.

Closing the gap

"One of the main reasons why there are so few minorities in the field of medicine is because of the mentoring gap. If nobody's there to tell you how to get into medical school, you're not going to get in," said Dale O. Okorodudu, MD, the project's founder and a senior resident at Duke University School of Medicine's internal medicine residency program in Durham, N.C. Too many students do not get advice about postbaccalaureate premedical programs or health-related master's degrees that can aid their chances of medical school admission, said Cedric Bright, MD. He sits on the project's board of directors and is assistant dean of admissions at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

"This online component ... provides a venue for folks to realize that there are role models out there that they don't see that often," Dr. Bright said. The American Medical Association is working to develop a LinkedIn-style mentoring site for medical students and residents to connect with practicing physicians.



Dale Okorodudu,
MD

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