



March 15, 2023

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***Submitted via e-mail to PCORI: ([workforcedevelopment@pcori.org](mailto:workforcedevelopment@pcori.org))***

***Re: Enhancing Workforce Development to Accelerate Patient-Centered Outcomes Research  
RFI#WD-2023***

Dear Dr. Cook:

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments to the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) on its request for information (RFI) *Enhancing Workforce Development to Accelerate Patient-Centered Outcomes Research*.

The AAMC is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 157 U.S. medical schools accredited by the [Liaison Committee on Medical Education](#); 13 accredited Canadian medical schools; approximately 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and the millions of individuals across academic medicine, including more than 193,000 full-time faculty members, 96,000 medical students, 153,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Following a 2022 merger, the Alliance of Academic Health Centers and the Alliance of Academic Health Centers International broadened the AAMC's U.S. membership and expanded its reach to international academic health centers.

The AAMC supports PCORI's commitment to comparative clinical effectiveness research that generates meaningful evidence to better inform health decision-making. We value how the Institute has identified specific goals related to its strategic plan, namely through the development and adoption of PCORI's National Priorities for Health<sup>1</sup> and PCORI's Research Agenda<sup>2</sup>, and agree that expanding the infrastructure needed to further advance patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR) is critical. Strengthening both the workforce that specializes in this research as well as the systems that support it will produce positive outcomes for patients, caregivers, clinicians, researchers, and health systems. Furthermore, the AAMC applauds PCORI

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<sup>1</sup> See AAMC Comment Letter, [PCORI's National Priorities for Health: Proposed Priorities for Public Comment](#) (August 27, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> See AAMC Comment Letter, [PCORI's Proposed Research Agenda for Public Comment](#) (January 31, 2022).

for establishing its Workforce Development unit in that it will both champion this research and enable its sustainability through identifying training opportunities and equipping current and future PCOR leaders with relevant tools and skills.

**Programs and engagement strategies to serve workforce development needs:**

The AAMC is pleased to see that PCORI and AHRQ are building on the success of the 2018 AHRQ-PCORI Institutional Mentored Career Development Program (K12) that provided training, educational support, and research opportunities to PCOR researchers and identified competencies for training learning health systems scientists. Several AAMC member institutions were named Learning Health Systems Centers of Excellence through these awards, and the AAMC has highlighted some of the work developed through this program in past meetings. Given the positive response from meeting attendees and their interest in learning more, it is encouraging to see the recent announcement of the PCORI/AHRQ funding opportunity to create the Learning Health System Embedded Scientist Training and Research (LHS E-StaR) Centers. This additional investment exhibits PCORI and AHRQ’s ongoing commitment to advancing capabilities in this space, and we look forward to seeing future outputs from this work.

With the PCORI/AHRQ learning health systems initiative evolving into its next stage, we recommend that PCORI expands its efforts to disseminate PCOR tools and trainings so that other health systems and settings can learn about approaches for supporting the health research workforce. Sharing techniques that have been developed and implemented at other sites will help spread the adoption of PCOR strategies to reach institutions beyond those that directly received funding through the PCORI/AHRQ awards.

**Skills and capacities to support health research workforce development:**

As PCORI identifies opportunities for future workforce investment, it should consider ways to highlight and encourage multidisciplinary partnerships both within and across systems, including community collaborations. A key element of PCOR is its multidisciplinary nature, which requires collaboration and coordination across all mission areas of academic medicine. The AAMC is aware of both the benefits and the challenges of operating within a learning health system, and we have previously examined this topic. With funding provided by The Patrick and Catherine Weldon Donaghue Medical Research Foundation, the AAMC hosted the Building Learning Health Systems at the Point of Care Roundtable at the AAMC headquarters in Washington, DC in October 2022. This event, at which PCORI participated, brought together clinical, research, and administrative leaders from academic medical centers to discuss key attributes of learning health systems. Among several topics, participants were asked what fields of study, trainings, or skills would benefit clinicians or researchers working within a learning health system. Responses highlighted several disciplines, including clinical informatics, study design, implementation science, quality improvement, organizational effectiveness, team science, community engagement, and knowledge translation. However, respondents noted that team members do not necessarily require training in each field—the benefit of operating within a learning health system is that the environment unites various experts to work collaboratively. We encourage PCORI to continue engaging with the AAMC and our member institutions as partners when exploring opportunities for further develop the health research workforce.

**Strategic opportunities for PCOR workforce development:**

The AAMC commends PCORI's intention to align the Workforce Development unit activities with its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The AAMC leads [several programs and initiatives](#) that aim to advance diversity of the health care and research workforce as early as college through faculty and leadership levels. These include longstanding national leadership development programs for women faculty and faculty who are historically underrepresented by race and ethnicity. Additionally, the [AAMC Career Development Program for Maximizing Opportunities for Scientific and Academic Independent Careers \(MOSAIC\) Scholars program](#) provides mentorship, skills-building, and leadership development for cohorts of National Institutes of Health (NIH)-awarded K99/R00 scholars from diverse backgrounds as they transition from postdoctoral researchers into academic research faculty positions.

The AAMC recognizes that developing the future workforce needs to start early, and collaborations with organizations and institutions committed to advancing K-12 education are critical. Through the [AAMC Strategic Plan](#), we are deepening partnerships across the education continuum to identify systems-based solutions to develop a diverse workforce. This opens opportunity for PCORI to collaborate with the AAMC and extend the reach of PCORI's Workforce Development unit to earlier stages of career development.

**Other priorities or considerations related to PCOR workforce development:**

Attracting a diverse workforce is only part of the solution. To fully actualize a diverse health care and research workforce, it is also important to foster a culture and climate that enables everyone to thrive. The AAMC welcomes the opportunity to serve as a resource and share insights from our data and work supporting the career development and advancement for learners and scholars who have been historically underrepresented in the medical and research workforce.

In summary, the AAMC appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments and we support PCORI's work to identify approaches for supporting the development and training of a diverse PCOR workforce within learning health systems. We encourage PCORI to engage with us and our member institutions as partners on this topic. If you have any questions, or if the AAMC can be of future assistance, please feel free to contact me or my colleague, Anne Berry, Lead Specialist, Implementation Research and Policy ([aberry@aamc.org](mailto:aberry@aamc.org)).

Sincerely,



Ross McKinney, M.D.  
Chief Scientific Officer

cc: David J. Skorton, M.D., President and Chief Executive Officer