Alison Clay Early Career Educator Award

As a first-generation medical student, Alison became interested in both critical care and teaching when she interacted with the intensivists who were course directors for her pathophysiology course in medical school. Their knowledge and skills were so impressionable, she committed to wanting to be an intensivist with a role in medical education.

As a fellow in the early 2000’s, she received the support of her division chief, Dr. David Schwartz, to dedicate her research time to a medical education project. She gave back an NIH award to develop her fellowship project which included developing a critical care curriculum, utilizing 360 evaluations, standardizing expectations for key aspects of training in the ICU (1), and understanding national critical care education and the impact of duty hours (2). As junior faculty, she was appointed to the medical education committee of the American Thoracic Society and participated in the description of core competencies for pulmonary/critical care fellowship (3).

Alison’s role in undergraduate medical education started when she became the course director for the Capstone course at Duke University School of Medicine. In this role, she took a course that was 160 hours of classroom work for graduating medical students and transitioned it to competency-based education with coaches assigned to students, use of the flipped classroom, and evaluation of clinical skills using small group teaching sessions with coaches, high-fidelity simulation, standardized patients. Over time, Alison took over additional teaching responsibilities, including creation of standardized critical care curriculum for graduating medical students, and small group teaching of both first- and second-year students. In 2017, Alison became the Assistant Dean of Clinical Education at the Duke University School of Medicine. Throughout this time, she has conducted medical education research to determine the effectiveness of her projects (4-12).

Alison continued her involvement with the ATS Medical Education Committee and became a founding member of the Section on Medical Education, and the second chair of the section (following Trish Kritek). Under her tenure, the section grew to over 1400 individuals, developed working groups in medical education research and undergraduate medical education, and created a sustaining organizational structure and vision for the section, resulting in a section structure that mimics that of ATS Assemblies. Alison has been active working with the evaluation of teaching videos hosted by the website and developed under the leadership of Nitin Seam.

Additionally, Alison has worked to improve patient care and education, particularly around the experiences of survivors of the ICU and the post-intensive care syndrome (13-16). In this role, she has humbly offered up her own experiences as a patient in the intensive care unit, often sharing her vulnerable and at times embarrassing moments (17-21). In this role, she has spoken for ATS and the Society of Critical Care Medicine, run a Facebook closed group for survivors of critical illness and hosted electronic support groups


