

Ricardo Correa, MD, on value of med student and resident research

AMA's Moving Medicine video series amplifies physician voices and highlights developments and achievements throughout medicine.

Featured topic and speakers

In today's episode of Moving Medicine, AMA Chief Experience Officer Todd Unger talks with Ricardo Correa, MD, program director of the Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism Fellowship and the director for diversity of graduate medical education at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix, about the importance of research in medicine and how students and residents can get involved through the AMA Research Challenge.

This year's AMA Research Challenge finals will take place live on YouTube on Dec. 8, 7 p.m. Central.

Speaker

- Ricardo Correa, MD, chair-elect, IMG Section Governing Council, AMA

Transcript

Unger: Hello, this is the American Medical Association's Moving Medicine video and podcast. Today we're talking with Dr. Ricardo Correa, the program director of the endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism fellowship, and the director for diversity of graduate medical education at the University of Arizona College of Medicine in Phoenix, about the importance of research in medicine and how students and residents can get involved.

Dr. Correa also serves as the chair-elect of the AMA International Medical Graduate section, or IMGS, Governing Council and as an advisory member for our annual AMA Research Challenge, which is what we're here to talk about today. I'm Todd Unger, AMA's chief experience officer in Chicago.

Dr. Correa, thanks so much for joining us. And thank you again for all your work as an advisory member for the AMA Research Challenge, which is bigger and better than ever this year. It's the second timeout. And this year, there's a \$10,000 grand price sponsored by Laurel Road for the winner. And we're looking forward to finding out who that winner is on December 8. Our main reason for holding that research challenge every year is to promote new thinking, particularly from our next generation of physicians.

Unger: So let's talk about that. We know research has always been critical but why is academic medicine especially important right now?

Dr. Correa: First of all, thank you so much, Todd, for the invitation. And it's a real pleasure to be here, sharing with you and with everybody about the importance of research and the importance at the end of research symposium of the AMA and presenting there. So right now we are living in a world that everything is based on evidence. So as we know every decision that we make, we base those on evidence. So where are the evidence coming from, one part of that pie is research.

So from COVID-19, we know that the important thing to have is everything based on that latest scientific news. And we know that science change. So doing research in academic medicine is what is going to foster, one your career but also going to foster the science behind and will make you and make the world a better place. So to finalize, I will like to say that research is very important, the way of implementing it. It's something that it's very important for everybody. And we would like to stimulate more people to do research and present the research in one of these kind of ... activities.

Unger: It's interesting. Last week in our section plenary session, we talked about the elements of science and storytelling, is that something important? The combination of those two things as you think about this research challenge?

Dr. Correa: Definitely. So in science, without a person that can tell a good story is nothing. So if you do a scientific work and you know everything about it but there is no way where you can express it, then it fails. So the combination of that art of telling a story with the science that you have doing is the perfect combination. So you can express really what you are doing to any kind of public. In this case, we are presenting to physicians but there are many cases that you should present to the public, the main public. So it's very important to have that ability when you become a scientific, a physician scientist person, to have the ability to communicate the work that you are doing.

Unger: What I'm curious as an academic physician, and what role do you see academic physicians and academic centers playing as we look to reimagine health care and what I hope will be a post pandemic era.

Dr. Correa: So it's very interesting question. So the academic medicine right now, it's in a place where it should not be, there is stock in where clinicians that want to the research cannot do research

because they don't have the opportunity or protected time to do that kind of research. And we need more research to foster medicine. So the future should be that anyone that have some interest in pursuing some clinical investigator or some basic site investigator should have some protected time to do this, and then foster that person to continue that pathway, because not everybody likes this pathway but to continue that pathway and then give them the opportunity so they can grow.

I envision that the future will look like the past. And when I talk to my mentors and senior people, they always tell me like, "Oh, 40 years ago, 30 years ago, it was so easy to get protected time for research. And then we were doing so many research but now the younger generation is not facing that". So I think that after COVID, things will going to change because COVID, what triggers us, that we need research faster than what we have in the past. And that is going to happen in the next upcoming years.

Unger: Now, you've talked about the mission of academic centers in your mind being, you call them tri-fold or three part, what would those three parts be?

Dr. Correa: Yeah, definitely. So the three parts of an academic institution should be the clinical part. And always, that's the biggest part where you take care of patients and you provide the best care to those patients. With education, it's very important in that mission where you take care of the new generation of physicians, where you foster those generations to a new era. And the third part that is as important as the other is where you produce research, where your academic center produce the latest news in X or Y or CDCs. And that is going to change the entire aspect because that changed the educational and the clinical aspect. So, one, I think I always say this like one feed the other and it's a cycle. If you don't have one of the three, then the cycle is not complete.

Unger: So we get patient care, you've got kind of training the next generation of physicians and you've got the research part. So let's talk more about, how should students and residents consider research as they begin their careers.

Dr. Correa: So it's very important. I think that the most important thing as a student and a resident, when you're starting your career and you want to get involved in research and just getting a step back, not everybody needs to get involved in research. It's a passion that you have or not.

We need all of the other two parts. We need an excellent clinicians. We need an excellent educators. But if your passion is to get and develop as an excellent researcher, the first thing to do is to select a good mentor, that mentor that will guide you through in your entire pathway. And that will make you take the correct decisions in your career. After selecting that mentor is participating with that mentor in their research activity at the beginning, under the guidance of that person. But with the goal that several years after that, you will be an independent person. You can consult with them, yes, but that you are doing your own work. And then you start growing like that. And in the future, you are that mentor that will become the stimulant for the next generations to go to that area.

Unger: So you mentioned earlier, especially for young people, kind of, there's a hard to carve out that time for research, are there ways that you can support students and residents and IMGs in their research efforts?

Dr. Correa: So there is certain opportunities depending on the center where you are. So not everybody will have the specific time for them to support and foster the careers of others. But that's the strategy plan that you should have whenever you are trying to select your next job. In my case, personally, I have been looking and then finally found a job where I had that opportunity, where I have the opportunity to do the things that I like, the clinical, the education but also the research and then being mentors of the next generation.

And in that way, there's always a possibility to do it but it's not easy. I think that's where we were talking about how you envision the academic medicine. And I think that should be the future where everybody that wants to do it, have the opportunity to do it. There are certain institutions that will be more likely to do it at this time. And I will recommend people that likes to do research, to find the career pathway in those institutions. And then if you like more, the clinical part then goes to institutions that are more clinical.

Unger: Well, maybe the message is getting through because we had a record number of entries into this year's AMA Research Challenge, nearly 1,200. It's the largest national multi-specialty research event for medical students, residents, fellows and IMGs in the nation. What are you looking forward to in this year's challenge?

Dr. Correa: It's very excited Todd about this. I remember approximately 16, 17 years ago when this symposium or research symposium start. We were having yes, certain decent amount of posters getting through but seeing the amount of posters and research presentations that we are getting this year, that is the record of all of the years and seeing the amount of good quality research, it's not, oh, anyone that 1, 2%. No, there's good, quality research behind this. It's amazing. I'm looking to see all of the posters that going to the top 50, and now the top five, to express what they are doing and to demonstrate to the world and to the country that they are making the change. And they are residents. They are IMGs and they are students that really wants to make a change. They really wants to contribute science. And this is demonstrated in this research symposium.

Unger: Dr. Correa, I get to see many of your posts on social media, about all the exciting work that you are doing. You've got this amazing career. What is your advice for future researchers?

Dr. Correa: Yes. My advice is one, if you have the passion for doing it, you can do it. Do not let anyone destroy that passion, destroy that goal in your career. There will not be a straight line to achieve research in academia, there will be some curves but the goal at the end is the same. The goal is that you want to become a physician scientist that you want to produce research that you want to change the world. I think that we have a reason in this world that we come and we have to change

something. Scientists that kind of things. You can produce things that can have impact not only in one patient but a kind of an impact in population, in an multiple patients. So continue with your dream. Don't let anyone do and then find persons that can guide you. This is the second part, that find person that can guide you.

Probably, not everybody will do it but when you find that person, cultivate that person, continue with that mentor. And the last part that I want to do is continue presenting your work and going to meetings like the AMA, where you can network and network is so important in research because you will find somebody that is doing something similar or somebody that can help you to achieve your project. And that is where the other part comes, where the others are helping you and then you help others. So I think that this is very important, mentorship, networking and your passion, and that will lead you far away.

Unger: All right. Budding researchers, you heard it from Dr. Correa. That's terrific advice. Thank you so much for joining us. That's it for today's Moving Medicine video and podcast. And as a reminder, the AMA Research Challenge finals are going to take place live on YouTube, December 8 at 7 p.m. Central time, where our five finalists who emerged from what was initially more than 1,100 submissions will present their research to an elite panel of judges and compete to be the overall winner and recipient of a \$10,000 grand prize sponsored by Laurel Road. For more information, visit ama-assn.org/researchchallenge.

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