Dear Cutis®:

A growing concern for the decline in the number of academic dermatologists has led to several studies exploring possible explanations and solutions to reverse this ongoing trend. Based on prior research, one of the characteristics of a dermatology residency program found to be strongly, inversely, and seemingly paradoxically correlated with producing full-time faculty was receiving Dermatology Foundation (DF) grants from 2001-2004. We sought to objectively review Career Development Award (CDA) recipients from 1990-2002 to determine their career paths at least 5 years after receiving CDAs.

For this study, names of CDA recipients from 1990-2002 were obtained from the DF. Exclusion criteria included recipients who did not complete their residency in dermatology and part-time or volunteer faculty members. Career Development Award subtypes analyzed included Clinical CDA, Clinical CDA in Health Care Policy, Clinical CDA in Dermatologic Surgery, and Research CDA. To determine if a recipient was a full-time faculty member as of December 2007, a search for each recipient's name (N = 79) was performed using various online search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, particularly for updated dermatology department Web sites, to retrieve their current academic affiliation. The 2007-2008 American Academy of Dermatology membership directory also was used as a guide to locate or contact members who were difficult to find. Some recipients received the award for up to 3 years. The percentage of recipients involved in full-time academic dermatology including trends based on the number of years awarded CDAs (1, 2, or 3 years) as well as the percentage of recipients involved in full-time academic dermatology by award subtype were calculated. Analysis was performed using the χ² test and *P < .05* was considered statistically significant.

Of the CDA recipients, 68.4% (54/79) were involved in academic dermatology full-time as of December 2007 and 3.8% (3/79) achieved the academic level of chair/chief. Continued involvement in full-time academic dermatology varied by the number of years awarded CDAs (χ²=1.389; *P = .499*). Of the recipients awarded CDAs for 1, 2, or 3 years, 60.7% (17/28), 76.2% (16/21), or 70.0% (21/30) were involved in full-time academic dermatology, respectively. By subtype, 100% (5/5) of the Clinical CDA in Health Care Policy recipients were involved in full-time academic dermatology followed by 66.7% (2/3) of the Clinical CDA in Dermatologic Surgery recipients, 66.7% (18/27) of the Research CDA recipients, and 65.9% (29/44) of the Clinical CDA recipients. Interestingly, 36.7% (29/79) of the recipients held combined MD and PhD degrees, and, of the 29 MD/PhD recipients, 21 (72.4%) remained in academic dermatology.

Of all graduating dermatology residents from 1970-2004, approximately 7.89% became full-time faculty members. Our current study demonstrated that 68.4% of CDA recipients from 1990-2002 were full-time academicians. Similarly, a survey of CDA recipients from 1999-2003 conducted by the DF revealed that 78% (88/113) of recipients continued involvement in academic dermatology. However, their internal study possibly included other award types that are not specifically CDA, such as Clinical Fellowship in Pediatric Dermatology or Research Fellowship. Interestingly, 0.0096% of all graduating dermatology residents became a chair or chief, whereas 3.8% of CDA recipients were found to hold these positions in the current study. Given that fewer than 10 years have elapsed since some of the recipients have been awarded a CDA, the percentage of CDA recipients becoming a chair or chief may actually be greater than 3.8%. Although statistical significance was not reached, our results demonstrated a positive trend in the number of years (1, 2, or 3 years) CDAs were received and the likelihood of remaining in full-time academic dermatology (60.7%, 76.2%, or 70.0%, respectively). An analysis of CDAs by subtype revealed 100% of the Clinical CDA in Health Care Policy recipients remained in full-time academic dermatology. However, the low power of this subtype analysis may contribute to the
lack of statistical significance. This study clarifies our prior report and suggests that full-time faculty who had received CDAs are more likely to remain in academic dermatology.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Channual, BS
Jashin J. Wu, MD
Irvine, California

The authors report no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES