

Notes from the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research:
Survey of United States Medical School Departments of Preventive Medicine

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Background:

Little is known of the collective characteristics of departments of preventive medicine throughout the United States, including department infrastructure and faculty and student demographics. As a result, the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) through a request for application (RFA) process, contracted with the University of Utah Department of Family and Preventive Medicine to survey United States medical school departments of preventive medicine. The full summary report, which can be found at www.aptrweb.org describes the methods used to develop and administer the survey, the results obtained, a discussion of those results, and recommendations for future work to better understand the collective nature of US-based departments of preventive medicine.

Selected Findings:

Of the 105 departments that were surveyed, 76 programs responded with nearly two-thirds being public institutions, nearly one-third were private and a small percentage having military or other affiliation. The geographic distribution showed about one-third being from the Northeast, about one-quarter from the Midwest, about one-fifth from the Southeast and about ten percent each from the Southwest and West. Preventive medicine departments included programs in public health (37%), preventive medicine (24%), epidemiology (24%), occupational medicine (20%), biostatistics (13%) and family medicine (4%) as well as a number of other miscellaneous programs.

Respondents were asked to provide input to ATPR regarding services that would be helpful to their departments. The following is a summary of the recommendations:

- Information regarding funding opportunities relevant to preventive medicine
- A link to the US community of departments of preventive medicine
- Educational opportunities
- APTR information

Future Plans

This survey provides an important first step in identifying the characteristics of US departments of preventive medicine. Key findings from this effort include information collected via the survey instrument as well as information gained while implementing the survey. The diverse nature of the academic composition of departments of preventive medicine is evident from survey findings. Programs within preventive medicine departments range from public health to occupational medicine. The efforts of this survey serve as the first step towards a more informed approach by the APTR. Further research is needed to complete and maintain the picture of these departments collectively. This will likely require ongoing efforts and incremental advances with existing departments of preventive medicine in addition to a focused effort to obtain comprehensive information from newly established departments prospectively. Further interactions with the departments who were a target of this research are needed for this purpose.

For more information about this survey, please contact Stephen C. Alder, Ph.D., Associate Director, Public Health Program, Department of Family and Preventive Medicine School of Medicine University of Utah, via email: steve.alder@utah.edu or Donna Page, MPH, APTR Project Manager (540) 380-5883 or dap@aptrweb.org.

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