

DR. MYRA MURAMOTO

Interviewed by: Weston LaGrandeur and Rohini Patel



Where and when did you complete your medical education?

I graduated from the University of Arizona College of Medicine, Tucson in 1985. I completed my residency in Family Medicine at the Alvernon program, here in Tucson. In addition to Family Medicine, I am board certified in Addiction Medicine and Obesity.

How did you become involved in research?

I did not really become involved in research until residency. As a chief resident, I had promised my classmates to become involved in a proposed project if it were to be funded. Unfortunately, the project did not get funded. However, I met a nutritional anthropologist who was very involved in international health research soon thereafter. This opportunity allowed me to travel to Egypt to conduct research focused on the interaction between nutrition and chronic disease. After that, I started doing research on substance abuse education. I returned to Africa for a year and a half, directing a large nutrition service and substance abuse surveying. I valued my work in public health, so I returned to the United States to get a Masters in Public Health and since then, I have continued to conduct research.

What is your current research?

For the past twenty years I have focused on commonly abused substances, such as alcohol and tobacco. I developed a tobacco cessation training module for physicians in Arizona. With the success of the training module, I wanted to make it available to subsets of the population who were in greater contact with tobacco addicts, such as family members, childcare providers and dental assistants. This segued into undertaking a ten-year project with medical students in India and Indonesia, focusing on tobacco cessation. The premise of this study was to prevent physicians from smoking, in order to motivate the general public to do the same. Currently, we have developed an online tobacco cessation module and are in the final stages of data collection and analysis.

How has being a Family Medicine physician influenced your research?

Because Family Medicine trains physicians to think broadly, you are able to see and compare certain issues that some specialists cannot. For example, you may take the standard of care in two fields and bring them together to improve patient outcomes. Some of my best research ideas have come from the integration of two elements that were previously thought to be separate. Additionally, Family Medicine doctors receive a large amount of behavioral training, which opens the door to research. Medicine should be studied from a behavioral perspective, which is why Family Medicine doctors are well-suited to conduct this type of research.

If you could go back in time, would you still pick Family Medicine?

Absolutely. Family Medicine prepares you to go almost anywhere, unless you want to be a surgeon. The many options allow you to pick a career that really fits your interests.

What are some misconceptions that you think some students have about Family Medicine?

I think one of the largest misconceptions is that we don't do research, and if we do, it is not funded. Medicine is a series of n=1 experiments of how patients respond to interventions. When you do that systematically, you are doing research, and Family Medicine is great for such opportunities. I have been funded by the NIH for over 20 years for my research.

What is one of the most memorable moments in your career?

I have experienced many career moments and feel fortunate and blessed. With Family Medicine, there are so many options, which have allowed me to pursue my interests. You will have a memorable career if you are willing to pursue opportunities, willing to learn and take calculated risks.

How can students get involved in Family Medicine research?

There are multiple areas in which medical students may become involved, such as data analysis, survey collection or patient/doctor interviews, to name a few. Also, there is always the opportunity to publish. Feel free to contact me with any questions about getting involved in research in Family Medicine.

Dr. Muramoto may be reached through email at myram@email.arizona.edu.