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Update on Review in Progress: Failure to Fail Underperforming Trainees in Health Professions: A BEME Systematic Review of the Barriers Inhibiting Educators.

The systematic review preliminary report was presented to the Society of Directors of Research in Medical Education (SDRME) annual meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, on June 29, 2015, as part of the grant received from the organization.

To date, in 2 groups reviewers (2 in one group, 3 in another group), the library of 5,339 citations has passed through title review. We selected the top 16 citations by title and abstract, that all reviewers agreed would best fit our research question, to conduct an initial data abstraction of the full article. We now plan to review the remaining 234 citations [143 abstract reviews, 91 full article data abstraction] in the ensuing 2 months (July and August 2015).

Preliminary findings indicate the majority of work on failure to fail stems from the nursing literature, and originate from Canada and the UK. There is dearth of reporting of demographics such as faculty years of experience in clinical and/or teaching work, or socio-demographics. The qualitative studies reviewed to date are all rated by the CASP-UK to be of good quality. We have identified barriers to failing a failing trainee, clustered around 6 overarching themes. These themes were grouped into specific failure-to-fail considerations: Professional or personal considerations for the evaluator or faculty, barriers stemming from the evaluation process and/or faculty development, barriers associated with trainee considerations, barriers associated with institutional considerations or normative beliefs, and barriers associated with the remediation process. We also identified the theme of duty to society, patient safety, and to professional standards and moral responsibility as strong themes that facilitated a faculty's willingness and ability to fail a failing trainee. Examples of these themes can be seen in the slides.

We look forward to completing the data collection and analysis, and unraveling new themes as well as gaps in the literature. Anticipated translation work includes innovative workshops that address the emotional toll, along with the professional and personal burden and ethical considerations of reporting an underperforming student, and augmented by the themes that support faculty in their difficult decisions.