

Focused on the Future

March 14, 2008

Dr. Wilkes speaks about recruiting and preparing future physicians and researchers

Duration

2:32

Transcript

I was fortunate enough to be selected as an Amos Fellow years ago in the early 90s, and they were instrumental in getting my career launched. The program really functions to set aspiring clinician-scientists to be attached to a panel of very high-profile mentors, so they can track and develop your career. The endpoint of which now is that many of the individuals who have gone through the program have had amazing success in careers in medicine and science. NIH Institute directors and others are among Amos former fellows. So, it's had a major impact and now regarded as one of the programs for training minority physician-scientists and scientists in the country.

This last week, I was speaking with a 14-year old who was interested in a career in science. And I think it's critically important that we address that. The Attucks program - the magnet program partnership with IU - was something that was driven by Dr. William Agbor-Baiyee at the school, who was fortunate enough to receive funding from the Howard Hughes Foundation to facilitate that process. That's a very critical piece, because as one of the things that the AAMC, the American Association of Medical Colleges, has stated is that we must increase medical school class size, and those classes must be diverse. However, if you look at the enrollment of minorities in medical schools, those numbers have been pretty much flat for 25 years. So the only way to enhance this process is to start at a much earlier time point in recruiting those individuals. So, having a magnet school that starts at the middle school level, and exposing those kids to science and medicine at an early time frame can only help this and help to capture a group that we really have to meet in order to meet our healthcare needs in the future.