



Medical Student Forum

EMERGENCY MEDICINE INTEREST GROUPS

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Abstract—Emergency Medicine Interest Groups (EMIGs) serve as a bountiful resource for students interested in pursuing a career in Emergency Medicine (EM). In this article we elaborate on how medical students can get involved as members in an EMIG, discuss opportunities for leadership through these groups, detail how to make the most out of the EMIG (including a listing of important lectures, workshops/labs and opportunities for growth and advancement), provide a framework for how to institute a new EMIG when one does not exist, and discuss considerations for international EMIG groups. © 2020 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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INTRODUCTION

Emergency Medicine Interest Groups (EMIGs) are an excellent resource for students that may be interested in pursuing a career in Emergency Medicine (EM). They offer a wide array of opportunities, which include learning about the specialty, networking with EM faculty and other interested students, as well as learning and practicing skills related to the specialty. For those that are even further motivated, EMIGs also offer both opportunities for leadership and demonstration of a strong

commitment to EM. Accordingly, EMIGs provide medical students with clinical exposure, research opportunities, and the chance to serve the local community (1,2).

DISCUSSION

Medical students interested in EM should get involved in their local EMIG, seek out the events and programs offered by the group, look for event flyers, check the medical school's event calendar, and talk to other students interested in EM. They should also consider joining their local EMIG's e-mail list and regularly check their website to keep abreast of the activities and opportunities offered. Students interested in EM should make time for EMIG events (3). Although medical school can get busy and stressful as there are always examinations and presentations looming, the time medical students put into attending EMIG events is certain to be valuable and worthwhile. This investment in time provides the opportunity to learn about the specialty, practice skills they will use on the wards, and develop professional relationships that will be indispensable as they apply for residency and advance in their career (2,4).

With that being said, one study suggested that the vast majority of medical graduates (97%) would recommend interest groups to incoming first-year medical students;

yet, they believed that interest groups have a minor influence on the choice of specialty (5). Nonetheless, medical students can still benefit from the “self-directed approach” to education provided by EMIGs, regardless of the choice of specialty (6).

As for those looking to become EMIG leaders in the future, attending as many events as possible will have multiple benefits. First, this will allow them to maximize their exposure to the type of events and programs run by the EMIG, which tend to cycle through the years. Second, they will have ample opportunity to observe the different leadership positions and decide which position fits them best. Finally, they will get the chance to demonstrate their dedication to the group, which is essential for any leader.

EMIG Leadership

EMIG leadership varies from group to group. The most common arrangements include a president, vice president, treasurer, social media chairs, mentor coordinators, and research liaisons.

The president oversees the operation of the group as a whole and delegates and coordinates responsibilities. The president runs the meetings and sets the agenda and goals for the year. The leadership also includes one or two vice president(s), whose responsibilities range from planning lectures, labs, and mentorship programs to coordinating logistics and communication. The treasurer oversees the budget and handles fundraising, and social media chairs manage e-mail lists and social media venues such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, an EMIG website, and weblinks. Mentor coordinators manage EMIG mentor programs, and research liaisons serve as contacts for students interested in EM research.

The selection process for leadership positions in EMIG varies by medical school. Senior-level students lead some groups and second-year students lead other groups. Positions can be obtained by either appointment or election.

Other leadership opportunities exist within each major EM professional organization. There are representatives from each medical school that serve as the contact person for the professional organization. This representative is usually someone who is already involved as a leader in EMIG. Students may also pursue additional leadership opportunities with the professional organizations (e.g., regional representative or committee member).

Making the Most of the EMIG

The following guidelines and tips will help leaders of an EMIG make the most of their group. Even if they are not involved in a formal leadership position, medical students should not be afraid to make suggestions or volunteer to take the lead on their suggestion.

The key to every successful group is to be organized. This includes holding a meeting prior to the start of the academic year to choose event topics and select preliminary dates. Planning will help prevent conflicts because the academic year typically gets hectic and demanding. Also, the leadership of EMIG should start contacting and recruiting speakers for its activities months ahead of time and then remain consistently in touch with them prior to the event. Maintaining an updated list of previous speakers and events that received positive feedback may help in the process of speaker recruitment.

Also, to stay organized, the EMIG leadership should keep a list of active members and maintain updated contact information for easier dissemination of information. Moreover, they should maintain a list of graduates from your school who have matched into EM residencies. This can be extremely useful to those who are looking for visiting rotations in EM as well as for the application and interview process.

EMIG Curriculum and Event Planning

Students and EM faculty have different preferences when it comes to the educational workshops offered by EM. Preclinical students seem to favor hands-on workshops, most notably suturing and splinting workshops. EM faculty, on the other hand, believe workshops about the specialty as well as those that help develop the students' core skills (focused history and physical examination) are more important. Both, however, agree that basic electrocardiogram interpretation is essential (7,8). Electrocardiogram interpretation workshops should ideally coincide with first- and second-year cardiology blocks.

Suturing workshops can be performed on pig feet or other suitable models. EMIGs can also provide ultrasound workshops, although faculty seem to believe it is less important than other workshops (7,8). It should include the details of performing a focused assessment with sonography for trauma (FAST) examination or abdominal ultrasound. Table 1 lists the possible providers for the different types of workshops.

Lee et al. proposed a basic curriculum for EMIGs, which can be tailored to the resources of the hosting institution (7,8).

The group should also plan events focusing on popular topics. These include an introductory lecture to EM with an overview of the specialty and fellowships. In addition, a lecture on planning a successful residency selection and match will be of extreme benefit to the group members. This will ideally focus on how to be an excellent applicant to EM, choose the right rotations, get strong letters of recommendation, conduct interviews, and manage the match process. This is best accomplished with the assistance of the residency program leadership at the

respective institution or a nearby institution with a residency program.

Lectures on select EM subspecialties may be interesting to medical students. Examples include a lecture on Disaster Medicine, possibly provided by someone who has been involved with a recent relief project, or one on Sports Medicine, Hyperbaric & Underseas Medicine, Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Event or Wilderness Medicine. A fellowship-trained emergency physician can share information regarding career and hobby opportunities with the EMIG members. The setting could be a lecture hall, a lab, a workshop or, in some cases, a field trip.

Another highly valuable event could be a post-match meet and greet. This consists of having students that have recently completed the match meet with the students who are about to begin the process to discuss their experiences.

Getting Bigger

Once the basics have been established, the leadership of EMIG should seek growth and advancement. One form of growing this group includes teaming up with other EM and non-EM interest groups. This further facilitates the issue of expenses and helps diffuse the responsibility of obtaining supplies, which can be split among the multiple groups co-sponsoring an event. For example, a suturing lab can be sponsored by both EMIG and the Surgery Interest Group.

Another way to ensure advancement of the interest group would be obtaining funds. Funds are needed primarily to provide food and refreshments for events. These can be obtained from grants provided by the medical school or EM professional organizations. The group could also benefit from selling pizza by the slice, coffee, bake sales, or other fundraising promotions between routine medical school lectures. The group could try, for example, bake sales, or the sale of scrubs to incoming students for anatomy lab or suture practice kits for students interested in a suturing lab.

Moreover, EMIGs should take advantage of technology. This includes maintaining an e-mail subscriber list for upcoming events and opportunities, maintaining a website where students can learn about the EMIG and follow links to other EM resources, using social media to advertise events and encourage networking, as well

as creating a blog that can teach EM pearls or techniques. Another way to use technology is developing and implementing podcasts that deliver core EM content to EM-bound medical students (9).

More importantly, the EMIG should rely on and mobilize EM faculty and residents at their institution or nearby as applicable. EMIGs should have at least one EM faculty advisor. However, involving many faculty members and residents will intensify the impact of the interest group.

Additionally, EMIGs may establish a mentorship program, where students are matched with resident or faculty mentors. Mentoring medical students aims to expose students to the specialty and a career in EM, provide ongoing advice, introduce the lifestyle of the emergency physician, highlight the importance of teamwork and the doctor-patient relationship, and offer opportunities to participate in ED operations (7). The mentors can also help the medical students identify EM clerkships (10).

Similarly, EMIGs may develop clinical experience programs. These can provide students interested in spending time in the ED, outside of a formal rotation, with observership opportunities. In fact, one study suggested that such observerships have a significant influence on the medical students' interest in EM, as they provide exposure to the numerous aspects of the field and of a career in the ED (11). Moreover, it was also shown that EMIG members have a better clinical performance during future EM clerkships when compared with their peers (12).

EMIGs should stay up to date with the national professional organizations. These include the American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM), the Resident Student Association (RSA), the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), the Emergency Medicine Residents' Association (EMRA), and the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM). EMIGs should aim to have professional organization representatives who keep the rest of the group informed about opportunities. Additionally, EMIGs can benefit from the resources made available by these organizations for tips on maintaining a successful EMIG. For example, AAEM, RSA, SAEM, EMRA and the International Student Association of Emergency Medicine (ISAEM) have online EMIG "start-up kits" that offer more detailed advice and information on starting an EMIG, databases of EMIG activities, downloadable files for lectures, and lab

Table 1. Possible Providers for the Different Types of Workshops

Workshop	Provider
Suturing	Upper level students, residents, or faculty
Splinting and Casting	Residents or faculty
Phlebotomy and Intravenous Access	Upper level students and residents
Ultrasound	Residents or faculty

Table 2. Student Section Websites for the Major EM Professional Organizations

Professional Organization	Website
American Academy of Emergency Medicine/Resident Student Association (13)	https://www.aaemrsa.org/get-involved/students/start-an-emig
American College of Emergency Physicians/Emergency Medicine Residents' Association (14)	https://www.emra.org/students/emergency-medicine-interest-groups/
Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (15)	https://www.saem.org/saem-foundation/grants/funding-opportunities/what-we-fund/emergency-medicine-interest-group-grant

handouts (13–16). Finally, leaders of an EMIG should spread the word about local, regional, national, and international conferences and symposia as well as make an effort to attend as a group. Table 2 lists the student section websites for the major EM professional organizations (13–16).

Starting an EMIG

Students in medical schools that lack an active EMIG have a fantastic opportunity to start one. Because EM has become increasingly popular, it is likely to have a good number of medical students who are both interested in EM and willing to work together to build the interest group. Medical students can inquire further about the criteria for forming a recognized interest group from the medical school student government, office of student affairs, or dean's office. The next step would be finding a faculty member in the medical school's associated ED who is willing to be the faculty advisor. The first point of contact should be the faculty member in charge of undergraduate medical education; because this person is already directly involved with medical students. Alternatively, the residency program director or the department chair may provide advice regarding the most qualified faculty member to approach.

Some EMIGs have developed a constitution that defines goals and objectives for the group, how leadership positions are assigned, and the duties of each. Leadership positions can be appointed by the previous leadership or voted on by EMIG members.

Next on the list would be advertising the new group to the medical school community. Planning frequent events while the group is still new will attract members. The new EMIG also should be advertised to the residents and faculty so that they may become involved as well.

INTERNATIONAL EMIGs

EMIGs are expanding outside the United States. In fact, an international nonprofit organization, known as the ISAEM, was established in 2013. ISAEM provides a platform for international EMIG chapters around the globe where they

can share their events and educational activities. It also serves as a forum to brainstorm workshop ideas and develop a toolkit that supports medical students in starting an EMIG and organizing activities that fit for both high and low resource settings. In the long term, ISAEM also aims to publish an open-access e-book using the information shared on the platform. ISAEM has been able to identify international EMIG chapters in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Bolivia, and, more recently, in Lebanon (16). The Lebanese EMIG chapter (EMIG-LC) was established in 2018 (17). EMIG-LC's membership grew exponentially to include more than 400 members just a few months into its establishment. It provides a platform for students interested in EM from all medical schools in Lebanon. EMIG-LC organized workshops, delivered lecture series, and provided research opportunities for medical students.

CONCLUSION

EMIGs allow medical students to learn more about career opportunities, get acquainted with the EM faculty and residents at their medical school, gain leadership experience in EM, and become well informed and better prepared for the specialty. Involvement in an EMIG, whether by planning an event or starting a group from scratch, should be a top goal for anyone who is serious about a career in Emergency Medicine.

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