

Welcome to Middle Management: Keys to Success No One Taught You on Managing People as a New Chief Resident CORD18

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Dealing with Your Constituents:

- When dealing with program directors and administrative leadership, it is especially important that you know what is expected of you. If clear expectations are not provided to you, ask for them. You should also try to lighten your leader's load, know when to push and when to back off, and be careful with your leader's time.
- When dealing with residents, you need to serve as a role model and mentor.
- Avoid sliding too far up or down - you are a "middle" manager for a reason! Your responsibility is to be a liaison between program leadership and the residents. Sliding too far in one direction or the other destabilizes your role and influence.
- When working with chief residents from other departments try to get to know these people, which will make it easier to work with them. Try to avoid some of the hospital politics that may cause conflicts between your departments.
- Your relationship with your co-chiefs is key! Know the strengths of each individual and utilize them. Make a class within a class with your co-chiefs. Get to know each other, communicate often and support each other. Don't be competitive.
- Make time for regular meetings with your co-chiefs and program leadership. Understanding each others' perspectives and having healthy discussions about key issues is important for you to be successful in your role.

Scheduling:

- With almost all the decisions you make, you can't make everyone happy. With scheduling and some other things you can't make ANYONE happy. You have to get comfortable with this.
- Shift counters will emerge. Consider publishing shift tallies.
- There will be complainers. Be fair and you will sleep at night. It is often better if you as chiefs take more than your fair share of "undesirable" shifts.
- Don't go rogue with decisions on staffing without checking with those affected and publicizing the change way in advance.
- You will have to say "no" to shift requests in order to fully staff the ED.

Change:

- Everyone fears change; however, change is inevitable. Chiefs have to be agents of change.
- Try to understand the reasons behind the change by seeking out the historical perspective and discussing with program leadership and be open to it.
- Don't join in with the negative chatter even if you agree with it.

Rule Breaking:

- Someone will break the rules. Don't let it be you. You can't enforce the rules if you are breaking them.
- You may need to enforce the rules with your co-residents. Be firm but fair.

Have Your Co-Chiefs' Backs

- Your co-residents may try to split your chief group. They may ask one chief for something knowing that the other chief(s) would not agree with their perspective or requests. Ensure that you present a united front as chiefs and attempt to prevent splitting of the chief team.
- You may wish to have a standard response to all non-emergencies such as “we will have to discuss this as a group at our next chiefs meeting and get back to you.”
- Do not scapegoat one of your chiefs. If your co-residents are saying bad things about one of your co-chiefs, for example regarding the schedule, make sure you stand up for them instead of allowing that chief to become the target of all the disgruntled energy and complaints.

M&M Conference:

- M&M is a key way to leave your mark on the program.
- Your job is make sure everyone learns from mistakes.
- M&M can hurt feelings.
- People may ask you not to present their case.
- Make sure people know their cases are being presented - no one likes these kind of surprises.

Decision-Making:

- You have agency to make decisions. You were chosen because you have good judgement and are sensible. Be comfortable making decisions on your own.
- Use your resources (former chiefs, co-chiefs, program coordinator) before throwing your hands up. Getting the historical perspective or learning what has succeeded or failed in similar situations will help.
- Ask for approval if you are doing something rogue or potentially controversial.
- If in doubt, run it up the chain. It is easier for program leadership to have your back if they are looped in on the front end before an issue explodes in your face.

Staffing Issues/Resident on Leave:

- Expect this. It's almost inevitable.
- Publicize who is helping. Send emails thanking the people who have volunteered to cover. Work with your residency leadership to see if there are ways to reward people who are working extra. You may have to think out of the box (ie gifts cards or food at conference).
- People's enthusiasm will wane with time. At first, people will rally to help but this can wear off months later when you are still working extra. Be sure to continually check in with and thank those who are working extra.

When Horrible Things Happen:

- Invest in building a family before something terrible happens.
- Get your group together to share information and debrief early.
- Continue to check in with people over time.
- You may be surprised who is affected. Check in broadly.

Resources:

EMRA Chief Resident Survival Guide

ALiEM Chief Resident Incubator