Three members of the Department of Pediatrics have been awarded Innovation Grants from the new Stanford Medicine Teaching and Mentoring Academy. The awardees are Associate Professor Lisa Chamberlain, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Pediatrics (General Pediatrics), Assistant Professor Henry Lee, MD, MS (Neonatology), and pediatrics resident Danielle Shin, MD.

Dr. Chamberlain’s work is focused on addressing the growing gap between the increasing need for qualitative research skills and the limited opportunities that exist for faculty, fellows, residents, and medical students to learn them.

“There is an increasing emphasis on using qualitative research skills to evaluate emerging programs. Students at both undergraduate and graduate programs need structured training to develop these skills,” said Dr. Chamberlain. “Qualitative methods make it possible to incorporate the participant’s voice into investigations of contemporary medical and public health challenges, and to address questions left unanswered by quantitative approaches.”

Yet, she noted, few opportunities exist for faculty, fellows, residents, and medical students to gain the foundational knowledge necessary to conduct rigorous qualitative or mixed-methods research, and such training may be difficult to obtain given clinical duties and required coursework. To that end, she and her colleagues, Dr. Janine Bruce and Dr. Sylvia Merrell, are developing an online, video-based curriculum that will address the growing interest in qualitative and mixed-methods research. “It is gratifying to work with trainees at all levels, helping them grow as researchers as they gain valuable skills.”

Dr. Lee’s work grew out of a class he taught last quarter at the Stanford Design School. As part of that class, he and his colleagues at the d.school taught students how to use stories to communicate effectively with potential users of the products they are designing. From this work, he developed the idea of using storytelling to help medical students at various aspects of training, not only about a disease process, but also to gain empathy for the individual patient with a disease, as well as patients with that disease condition in general.

“We thought that this aspect of increasing empathy by storytelling could translate to medical students, who often have little exposure to the patient’s life experience prior to seeing them briefly in the hospital or clinic,” he said. “Empathy is an important aspect of medical training, but may be difficult to teach in a classroom curriculum.”

Dr. Shin’s research was driven by her recognition that the study of medicine, with its emphasis on presenting on rounds, thinking out loud and on-the-spot, and projecting confidence in uncertain situations, can be a challenging environment for introverted individuals. The goals of her project are to assess whether a preference for introversion (using the Myers-Briggs scale) affects the evaluation of resident competence, to identify themes among evaluator comments directed toward introverted versus extroverted residents, and to gather residents’ perspectives on how their preferences may have affected their training experience.

“The most rewarding aspect of this research so far has been the number of residents who have sought me out after hearing about this study,” Dr. Shin said. “There are real differences exist in the way people interact with the world, and particularly in a field as complex as medicine, it can be it helpful to be able to identify how you personally prefer to take in information and make decisions so that you can maximize your own learning potential and provide the best patient care possible.”