

Northwest Native American Research Center for Health: Fellowship Trainees' Success Over 15 Years of Funding

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Introduction

American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) continue to be severely underrepresented in biomedical research, particularly in principal investigator roles. Efforts to decrease health disparities have focused on building research capacity and training highly skilled AI/AN health researchers who can conduct quality research in their tribal communities. Funded by the NIH/NIGMS and the Indian Health Service, the NW NARCH program has offered financial support and mentorship to AI/AN biomedical and public health graduate students. The goal of this NPAIHB-housed program is to develop highly skilled AI/AN health researchers - particularly in principal investigator roles - focused on population health research in areas of concern to tribal communities. Since 2001, the NW NARCH program has supported the professional advancement of 149 AI/AN graduate students and employees in public health and/or biomedical research. In 2018, all NW NARCH trainees were surveyed to track their progress and career development.

NW NARCH AWARDS

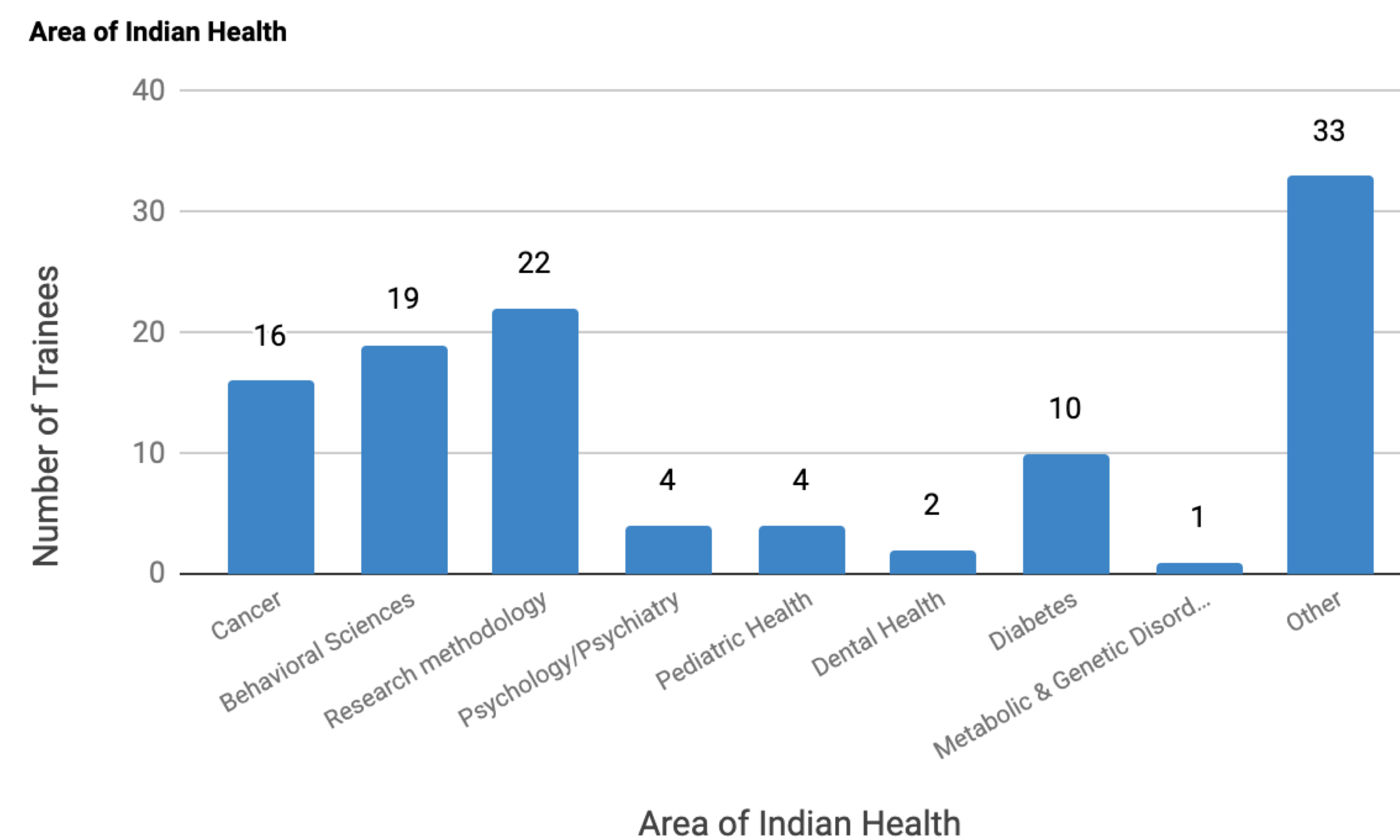
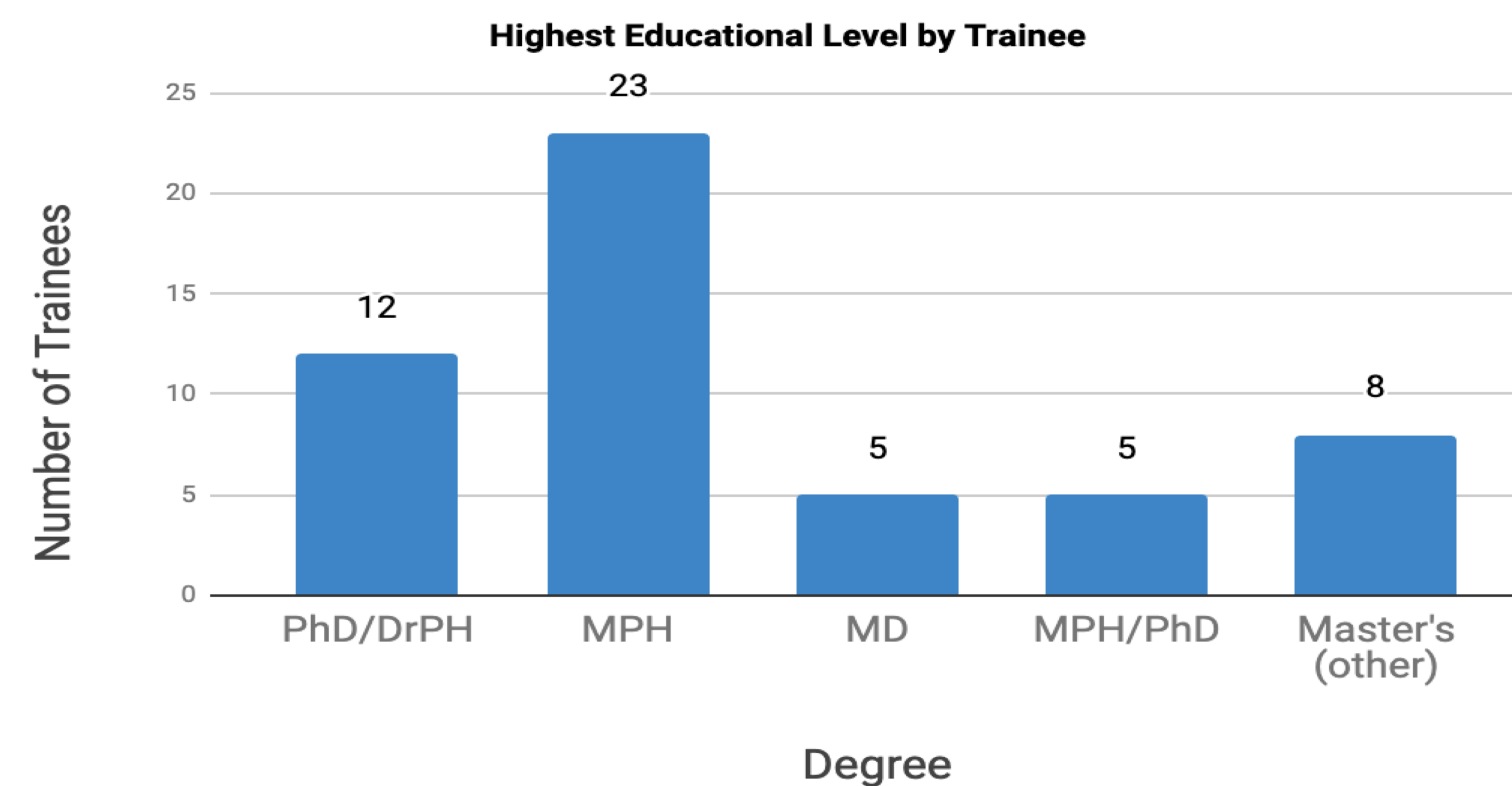
Award Type	Recipients	Purpose/Description
Faculty Award	Postdoctoral AI/AN trainees interested	Increase research capabilities of postdoctoral AI/AN trainees to conduct well-designed research in tribal communities
Fellowship Awards	Master's & PhD students	Increase research capabilities of graduate AI/AN trainees to conduct well-designed research in tribal communities
Scholar Award	NPAIHB Native and non-Native employees seeking additional career-related research skills	Up to \$5,000 awarded to NPAIHB researchers/year
Intern Award	Medical/Public Health students working on short term projects	Paid hourly wage. Short term.

Evaluation Methods

- 149 NW NARCH trainees were emailed a 13- question survey bi-weekly over a three-month period
- Internet searches and/or phone calls made to update information and encourage survey completion
- Incentive to complete survey

Results

- 42.3% response rate
- Highest Level of Education: 43.4% MPH; 22.6% PhD



- Work in: Academia (38.8%); TEC (26.5%); Tribal Health Boards (20.4%)

Accomplishments

- Professional Presentations (n=52): 183
- Publications Written & Submitted (n=61): 105
- Grants Written & Awarded (n=21): 11 federal grants

Facilitators for Success

Factor	Frequency (Percent)
Supportive Mentors	56 (93.3%)
Access to Professional Opportunities (e.g. conferences)	52 (86.7%)
Scholarship/Training Opportunities (including NARCH)	53 (88.3%)
Flexible Work schedule	40 (66.7%)
Other institutional support	26 (43.3%)

Barriers to Success

Factor	Frequency (Percent)
Limited financial resources	34 (68.0%)
Family related challenges	34 (68.0%)
Lack of appropriate mentors	18 (36.0%)
Other institutional barriers (e.g. timeframe to complete studies)	12 (24.0%)
No/limited access to professional development opportunities (conferences)	9 (18.0%)

Conclusions

Strengths of the NW NARCH program include:

- our ability to recruit promising AI/AN graduate students & maintain national network of tribal contacts – 95% of NARCH trainees met their professional goals.
- financial support and mentorship available are major facilitators to trainee development and success.

Response to the 2018 follow-up survey (42%) was significantly lower than the 2010 (83%) Despite our best efforts, we were unable to reach 25 award recipients. We are considering ways to more effectively update trainee information going forward.

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