Fall Immersion Trip 2015 – Boston

Urban Health Scholars

2015 – 2016 Scholars

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Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, Hanover, NH
Advisor: Shawn O’Leary, Shawn.M.O’Leary@Dartmouth.edu
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Introduction

The Urban Health Scholars of the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth are a group of students dedicated to becoming competent practitioners, researchers, and public advocates for medically underserved urban populations in an effort to promote health equity and social justice. The purpose of UHS is to foster an increased understanding across the Geisel community of the needs of diverse urban populations, while providing the Scholars with the experiences and tools they need to positively impact the health of these same or similar communities in their future careers. As Scholars, we tailor our experiences and our efforts based on the following principles: cultural versatility, service and outreach, clinical medicine, and continued education.

In accordance with our mission and our principles, the Scholars organize immersion trips annually during each academic year to large urban centers around the country in order to gain a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by each of these communities. Each trip is centered on educational and service opportunities. The second year scholars (Chinwe Echeazu, Brendin Beaulieu-Jones, Freddy Vasquez, TJ Meehan, Andrea Jaresova, and Dwan Pineros) along with the newly selected first year scholars (Aaron Briggs, Courtney Hanlon, Alec Fisher, Sarah Ghabbour, Spencer McFarlane, and TR Harris) traveled to the city in our closest vicinity, Boston, for our first trip of the year. Boston has a vibrant and diverse population and is the home to several large academic hospitals, and the state of Massachusetts has diverse and dynamic communities and has been a pioneer in health care reform. Each year this city gives UHS the opportunity to expose ourselves to its unique challenges and successes and we were graciously given the opportunity to extend our network and develop new long lasting relationships.
UHS Boston 2015 Itinerary

Thursday September 10th

6:30PM Depart from DHMC
8:30PM Check into hotel
   • Location:
     Courtyard Marriott Boston – South Boston
     63 R Boston Street
     Boston, MA 02125

Friday September 11th

7:15AM - 11:00AM Shriners Hospital for Children
   • Morning rounds, discussion over breakfast, and surgical skills
     simulation lab with Dr. Phillip H. Chang
   • Location:
     51 Blossom St
     Boston, MA 02114

12:30PM - 1:15PM Harvard Medical School
   • Meet-and-greet with Dr. Nancy Oriol (Founder of The Family Van)
   • Location:
     25 Shattuck St,
     Boston, MA 02115

3:00PM - 4:30PM Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program
   • Tour, discussion, and Q&A with Dr. Jim O’Connell, president, and
     Dr. Jessie Gaeta, chief medical officer
   • Location:
     780 Albany St
     Boston, MA 02118

7:00PM - 9:00PM Alumni Dinner with Dr. Chidi Achebe MBA, MPH
   • Location:
     10 Bonvini Drive
     Framingham, MA 01701

Saturday September 12th

9:00AM - 1:00PM Mattapan Health Care Revival Fair
   • Booth, volunteer activity
   • Location:
     249 River Street
     Mattapan, MA 02126

2:30PM - 5:30PM Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
   • Tour, discussion, and dinner with Dr. John Raser
   • Location:
     Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
     34 Haverhill St
     Lawrence, MA 01841
Shriner’s Hospital for Children
By: Aaron Briggs

During the most recent Urban Health Scholar’s trip to Boston we had the opportunity to tour the Shriners Hospital for Children in downtown Boston with Dr. Phillip Chang. Dr. Chang serves as an attending burn surgeon at both Mass General Hospital and Shriners Hospital for Children – Boston. To begin our day we shadowed Dr. Chang during his morning rounds. During this process we observed one of the aspects of the Shriners Hospital in Boston, which makes it unique: its diverse medical teams. Dr. Chang’s team included not only nurses and residents but also psychologists, a pharmacist and a child therapist. The children at Shriners Hospital in Boston receive an extremely high level of care from a highly qualified staff supported by some of the most sophisticated technology in the world – and the incredible fact is: many of the children receive this care for free.

The Shriners Hospital for Children in Boston is one of 22 Shriners Hospitals operating within the United States (in addition to a hospital in Canada and another in Mexico). Together, these hospitals have been described as “The World’s Greatest Philanthropy.” Following rounds, Dr. Chang took us on a tour of the hospital, elaborating on its mission and history. Dr. Chang explained that the Shriners Hospitals were established by the Shriners,
a Freemasonry-related organization, as an investment in a future where all children (regardless of socioeconomic status) could receive quality, specialist care. The Shriners Hospitals have become leaders in specialist, pediatric care and are currently able offer treatment to children suffering from pathologies ranging from spinal cord injuries to cleft lip regardless of the patients’ ability to pay. If the patient is unable to pay or lacks health insurance, the treatment expenses are automatically covered by the Shriners Hospital’s massive, billion dollar endowment.

The Shriners Hospital in Boston is a world leader in burn care and is the only exclusively pediatric burn center operating in New England. The hospital is deeply invested in burn research and in international burn outreach – both of which Dr. Chang is involved in. Dr. Chang allowed us to have a hands on interaction with the subject of his translational research which involved the development of a material able to simulate human skin – in order to allow burn surgeons to train in the removal of burnt skin. Dr. Chang prepared an interactive demonstration for us in which we were able to practice current surgical technique for skin removal with state of the art surgical tools using Dr. Chang’s simulator material (lasagna on top of a silicon gel pad).
Finally, Dr. Chang took our Urban Health Scholar’s group to Mass General Hospital to tour the room in which anesthetic was first used for surgical operations more than 150 years ago. The room stands as a testament to the incredible progress achieved by modern medicine and being able to stand in the same space occupied by some of the earliest medical pioneers made for an experience which was truly, ethereal.

The Family Van
By: TJ Meehan

After an exciting morning at Shriner’s Hospital for Children, the group travelled over to Harvard Medical School to meet with Dr. Nancy E. Oriol, an HMS Professor, Dean of Students, and co-founder of the Boston-based Family Van. It was truly a blessing to learn the history and development of the Family Van from someone so invested in its success. We learned that this mobile clinic was created over 20 years ago in collaboration with community partners, in order to increase access to health care and improve the health status of residents in Boston’s most underserved communities.

Mobile clinics are unique in that they travel directly to areas in which the need is greatest, removing barriers in access
to care, and ultimately improving the health of a region’s most vulnerable residents. By making preventive services available to those with the substantial healthcare needs and providing an alternative to costly emergency department visits, mobile clinics such as the Family Van save healthcare costs. Their work includes free health screenings such as blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and HIV, offering free lifestyle counseling and promoting health education in various languages.

Dr. Nancy Oriol also discussed her research in defining value and return on investment from mobile care clinics. She explained that she became interested in these topics in the late 1990s as she spoke with leadership from other mobile clinics around the country. She noticed that they all had the same problem, constantly have to fund-raise and prove their worth to donors. Therefore she developed an algorithm that estimates the number of dollars a mobile clinic saves the healthcare system by performing interventions with known cost associations. Preliminary runs show that the rate of return for the Family Van is more than 30 to 1, meaning that for every dollar spent by the van, the healthcare system saves approximately $30. Dr Oriol was proud of her work as she should be. It was really encouraging to see the impact that she has made in the city, and inspiring for each of us as we contemplated how we were going to give back to the future urban settings we hope to serve.
Boston Healthcare for the Homeless

By: Courtney Hanlon

After our visit to Harvard Medical School, the Urban Health Scholars visited the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP), located on the campus of Boston Medical Center. Scholars met with BHCHP President Dr. Jim O'Connell and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jessie Gaeta to discuss the challenges of providing care for urban homeless populations and the unique care model that has evolved at BHCHP over the past 30 years.

In an effort to increase accessibility for one of Boston's most vulnerable populations, BHCHP provides primary care medical staff as well as behavioral health and dental services for homeless men, women, and children in the greater Boston area. BHCHP is home to ten primary care exam rooms, as well as four behavioral therapy rooms, a dental clinic, and a "medical respite" floor where homeless patients who are too sick to stay in shelters may be cared for in a safe environment. Their facilities serve as an alternative to emergency rooms for homeless patients and as a safe place for patients with no options for hospital discharge. Originally funded in 1984 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, BHCHP is presently recognized as a federally qualified health center (FQHC).
During his meeting this the scholars, Dr. O’Connell described the integrative primary care, mental health, dental care, and social or behavioral therapy that BHCHP strives to provide. Dr. O’Connell and Dr. Gaeta also spoke to the many outreach programs for the ill and homeless throughout the city. Dr. Gaeta then gave the group a tour of the facilities and shared her experience in getting involved with medical care for homeless populations. The clinic's many shelter-based clinics serve as an important reminder that many homeless are either unable to travel to permanent clinic sites, or elect not to seek medical care until symptoms become severe. To address this challenge, BHCHP sends medical teams to several established homeless shelters in the community each week. The scholar's visit to BHCHP was a meaningful look into healthcare for one of urban communities' most underserved populations.

Dinner with an Alum
By: Chinwe Echeazu

After a day of informative and exciting experiences at Shriners Hospital, Harvard, and Boston Healthcare for the Homeless, we were excited to meet Geisel alum, Dr. Chidi Achebe (son of the infamous late Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe) at his home where he and his wife were preparing a delicious traditional
Nigerian meal (fried plantains, jollof rice, moi moi, baked chicken) – we brought the dessert. As we entered their beautiful home in Framingham, MA we were greeted with smiles, hospitality, and the mouth-watering aroma of what was sure to be a delicious meal. As we ate and chatted Dr. Achebe told us about his family, his journey through medicine, and some of his current initiatives aimed at fighting health care inequities and bringing more qualified services to the vulnerable and underserved populations here in America and back in Nigeria. Dr. Achebe completed his undergraduate education at Bard College, received his MPH from Harvard School of Public Health, obtained his MD from Dartmouth Medical School, and lastly attained his MBA from Yale School of Management. He has received multiple awards of recognition and holds various positions of leadership, with his most recent serving as the Chairman and CEO of African Integrated Development Enterprise (AIDE) and serving as the recipient of Dartmouth College’s Martin Luther King Social Justice Award. It was a pleasure to meet Dr. Achebe and we hope to keep in touch and establish a long lasting bond between he and UHS.

Mattapan Healthcare Revival Fair
By: Andrea Jaresova

On Saturday morning, the Urban Health Scholars volunteered at the Mattapan Health Revival Fair. At this event, we had a booth that focused on nutrition, especially as it relates to sugar intake. We showed that many foods marketed as healthy may actually be very high in sugar. For example, we brought a generic, seemingly healthy, nonfat yogurt and demonstrated that it has 19g of sugar per serving, which is more than 2/3's of a woman's
recommended daily sugar intake. Another example was Mott's applesauce snack packets. These, although considered good for children, had 17g of sugar in them due to the added sugar in the form of high fructose corn syrup.

To really understand the amount of sugar in the "healthy" foods, we spooned that amount of sugar onto a plate (1 teaspoon of sugar = 4.3g) and compared it to another plate with one's daily recommended sugar intake. When the two plates appeared similar, that meant that one serving of that food was almost one's entire recommended sugar intake in that day. This truly was a learning experience for us and the Mattapan Community members. At one point, a mother went up to our booth with her daughter and pointed to the Mott's apple sauce packet and said "see that's healthy." She was shocked when she saw how much sugar it contained.

We really enjoyed our time at the Mattapan community health revival fair. We even had two scholars participate in an exercise competition to promote an increase of physical activity in the community. At the fair, we saw and showed just how much food nutrition labels can be deceiving. This is
something to keep in mind when talking to patients are nutrition and their perception of healthy foods.

Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
By: Alec Fisher

The Urban Health Scholars look forward to our visit to Lawrence each year, due to a strong Geisel connection with this program. Many of our alumni have gone on to the Family Medicine Residency Program at GLFHC. The fact that several of them, including Dr. Andrew Smith ('04) and Dr. Jon Raser ('06) have remained in Lawrence over the years and stayed on to become attending physicians is a testament to the vibrancy of the community and the compelling nature of meeting the needs of an underserved population.

We traveled to the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center after the Mattapan healthcare revival festival on our 2015 Boston Immersion Trip. There we met with Dr. John Raser and his daughter (Elizabeth) who showed us around on a Saturday afternoon. As well as getting a private tour of the facility, Dr. Raser spoke about his work there. Dr. Raser is a family medicine doctor who lives and works in Lawrence and is an advocate for his patients both at the center and in the community. On our tour of the health center, Dr. Raser told us more about the innovative medical care they provide. GLFHC has adopted a patient-centered medical home model, which emphasizes teamwork among health professionals in separate pods across the clinic and addresses health issues from many perspectives. They promote group health sessions, healthy lifestyles, and community-wide interventions to improve health in a lasting and effective way.
Dr. Raser discussed the importance of health professionals being involved in the communities that they work and live in. Doctors have great potential to be local leaders and can use their knowledge and respected positions to initiate healthy programs and initiatives. In fact, Dr. Raser recently started a project to open a bike shop in the community. We detoured along our tour of the health center to visit his shop, BiciCocina, which he started to fill the need of the city, which hasn’t had an operating bike shop open in several years. With BiciCocina, Dr. Raser hopes to promote active lifestyles and safe streets through youth programs and community events. We had the opportunity to walk through some of the Lawrence center streets and observe some of the recent efforts to make the city a better place. We saw Up School – a transformational high school, the local skate park, local basketball courts and the common neighborhood park, all successful efforts to provide kids and teens in the community healthy activities outside of school. Lawrence is a unique combination of a city and small town. We saw Italian, Greek, Irish, Dominican, and Haitian churches and buildings and were able to appreciate the diversity of the Lawrence population.
Conclusion

Once again, the Urban Health Scholars had an exciting and informative immersion trip to Boston. We are grateful to each person who took the time out of his/her schedules to meet with us. Each opportunity we participated in furthered our understanding of urban medicine and the challenges to achieving health equity, motivating us further in the development of our future practices and initiatives. We concluded this trip with an extended network, potential speakers that we can bring back to campus, and rejuvenated ideas of ways we can share our knowledge and experiences with the Dartmouth and Upper Valley community. We would like to thank all of the supporters of UHS who make these trips possible each year. These experiences are critical for our professional development and we are tremendously grateful. Please feel free to contact any of the scholars for additional information about this trip, or our plans for future urban immersion experiences.

- Urban Health Scholars