Winter Immersion Trip 2016 – NYC

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Urban Health Scholars

2015 – 2016 Scholars

Brendin Beaulieu-Jones           Aaron Briggs
Chinwe Echeazu                   Alec Fisher
Andrea Jaresova                  Sarah Ghabbour
TJ Meehan                        Courtney Hanlon
Dwan Pineros                     TR Harris
Fernando Vasquez                 Spencer McFarlane
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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 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. These winter semester, second year scholars (Chinwe Echeazu, Freddy Vasquez, TJ Meehan, Andrea Jaresova, and Dwan Pineros) along with first year scholars (Aaron Briggs, Alec Fisher, Sarah Ghabbour, Spencer McFarlane, and TR Harris) traveled to the big apple. Scholars Brendin Beaulieu-Jones and Courtney Hanlon were unable to make it, but UHS was very fortunate to have been able to bring two other first years, Chris Louis and Angela Lee. Among the first years that applied but were not selected as scholars, these first years were consistently engaged in UHS events at Geisel and added a lot to the NYC experience. Additionally, UHS was able to have two Dartmouth premedical students join for the CCMP MLK event on Saturday. They brought lots of great questions for the medical students and enthusiasm to the CCMP volunteering event. UHS was very fortunate to be able to bring these new faces along, which provided for enriched experiences for all. Each year NYC gives UHS the chance 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 NYC 2016 Itinerary

Thursday January 14th
1:00PM  *Depart from Geisel, Lower Dewey*
6:00PM  *Check into hotel*
  - Location: Courtyard New York Manhattan/Chelsea
    135 West 30th Street New York, NY10001USA

Friday January 15th
7:15AM - 8:15 AM  *Breakfast with Dr. Anderson*
  - Location: Friedman’s Lunch
    132 W 31st St New York, NY 10001
9:00AM – 11:00AM  *Community Health Network*
  - Meet with Senior Team at the CHN administrative offices
  - Location: 60 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor
12:00PM - 3:30PM  *Community League (one of the CHN health centers)*
  - Lunch, welcome, and community health discussion with Jonathan Ramos
  - Tour of health center and linked high school
  - Location: 511 W 157th St.
    New York, NY 10032
4:30PM - 6:30PM  *CCMP Orientation*
  - Location: 1542 Remsen Ave.
    Brooklyn, NY 11236

Saturday January 16th
8:00AM - 12:30PM  *CCMP MLK Community Event*
  - Volunteer activity, blood pressure screenings
  - Location: PACPLEX
    1500 Paerdegat Ave N
    Brooklyn, NY 11236
12:30PM - 3:00PM  *CCMP Debrief and Lunch*
  - Event debrief and lunch with CCMP volunteer and Drs. Satterfield and Guerrier
  - Location: 1542 Remsen Ave.
    Brooklyn, NY 11236
Breakfast
By: Alec Fisher

On Friday morning, we gathered at Fredrick's Cafe for a nice breakfast before a big day. We were hoping to be joined by Dr. Matt Anderson, a Geisel Alumni working at Montefiore Health Center, but unfortunately he was unable to join us due to a last minute scheduling change. We were able to enjoy a New York breakfast Cafe and experience the local atmosphere before learning about healthcare systems in place for the people of this wonderful city.
Community Health Care Network

By: TR Harris

After an early breakfast, we scampered up to NoMad to make our first stop for the day, at Community Healthcare Network. CHN is a not-for-profit organization that provides access to quality, culturally competent and comprehensive community-based primary care, dental services, nutritional counseling, mental health care and social services for diverse populations in underserved communities throughout New York City. CHN first opened its doors in the late 1960s, and since then has expanded to more than a dozen sites serving thousands of individuals citywide.

We heard from senior leadership across healthcare disciplines. We first interviewed Dr. Matt Weissman, CHN’s Chief Medical Officer. Having worked in multiple academic and clinical settings, Weissman laid out the demographics of healthcare in the city, citing the stark disparities in access to care within and between boroughs. He explained how CHN operates FQHCs-- federally-qualified health centers-- which allows it to serve lower-income populations in a sustainable fashion. He discussed how the center’s commitment to comprehensive patient care allows providers the chance to see the natural progression of disease. Providers, subsequently, are able to truly understand the perspectives of their patients, and can provide a treatment regimen that best aligns the needs and lifestyle of their patients.

Dr. Freddy Molano quickly chimed into our conversation, sharing his wisdom from more than 25 years of service with CHN. Dr. Molano shared his commitment to HIV issues, starting his career with CHN as a health educator, and continuing to speak on behalf of communities affected with the disease. He shared of his work to expand support for HIV care management with pregnant women, and linking testing to disease suppression. Patients, under his watch, not only
understand their diagnosis, but also have a long-term course of action to suppress the disease. He also discussed how the city is committed to eradicating HIV by 2020, and through the clinic, Dr. Molano is finding ways to reach out to adolescents who don’t have access to treatment.

Dorothy Farley, a licensed social worker and VP for Behavioral Health, Social Services and Care Coordination then shared about her 25 years with CHN. She emphasized how the center aligns treatment to behavioral and social health, citing how medical treatment is dependent on social and behavioral health. Focusing on the whole patient, Farley stressed how physicians need to be culturally competent, so that they understand the motivations and barriers to treatment patients face. An example that resonates me was in learning a second language so that I may communicate with patients who don’t speak English. She said how important it is that, in learning a new language, that we learn more than just the language, but also the culture and perspective through which language is shared. I thought translating was hard enough.

We ended our time with the senior leadership team learning about CHN’s past as well as where it’s headed. We were excited to see how physicians practice alongside other healthcare providers to treat the whole patient. We take with us an
understanding that our work as physicians requires us to function as one part of a team; that our work must mirror the communities we serve; and that we must first listen and learn before we attempt to diagnose and treat.

Community League Health Center (one of CHN’s community health centers)

By: Aaron Briggs

During the Urban Health Scholar’s 2016 trip to New York City we had the privilege of touring several organizations operating within Washington Heights that are fighting the medical disparity and vicious cycle of poverty which so often characterize underserved communities. Our tour started at the Community League Health Center (CLHC), a Community Health Network (CHN) site located in Washington Heights, a traditionally underserved, Hispanic community. During our guided tour led by the site director, Jonathan Santos-Ramos we learned that the CLHC, as with all other CHN sites,
provides myriad of services to the Washington Heights community, which focus not only on providing affordable care but also promote prevention and community revitalization. CLHC’s multidimensional view of health underscores the importance of social determinants of health – a theme the Urban Health Scholars encounter frequently in article discussions.

Following the completion of our tour of CLHC we were taken upstairs to the Community Health Academy of the Heights (CHAH) – a high school which left a strong impression on the hearts and minds of many an Urban Health Scholar. CHAH represents a meaningful step toward the elimination of socioeconomic disparity and for many families, will break the vicious cycle of poverty, which serves to effectively shackle residents of under resourced communities to the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. Walking through the spotless halls of CHAH, moving from one disciplined, state of the art classroom to the next, many Urban Health Scholars likely forgot the children they saw astutely working on in class projects came from under resourced homes.
CHAH provides the children of Washington Heights not only with a high caliber education but also with access to healthcare. The school, through its partnership with CLHC, has worked to provide glasses to students who could not previously afford them and also offers counseling to children whose mental health has been

One of the 8th graders pieces of art for MLK day (artwork photographed and used with permission)
affected by the psychological traumas tragically associated with the milieu of toxic environmental and social factors present within underserved communities. Our tour guide assured us that this is only the beginning, and that additional health care services are in the process of being rolled out to further benefit the children of Washington Heights.

The organizations operating within Washington Heights provided the Urban Scholars with a tangible sense of the change which will be necessary to forward social equity and eliminate health disparity. The work of CLHC and CHAH underscores the multidimensional nature of health. The Urban Health Scholars are again reminded that improving the health of the urban underserved involves more than just improving access to treatment – for true health equity to be achieved revitalization of under resourced urban communities must be prioritized in order to undo the damage inflicted by generations of poverty.

Orientation with Elizabeth Stevens of the Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals

By: TJ Meehan

We ended our Friday in Brooklyn with a training session led by Elizabeth Stevens of the Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals (CCMP). Our current second years volunteered with this organization last year when we visited, and we had a blast learning about their history, as well as in helping to organize a CCMP-hosted, root canal session for a few dozen local patients in need of endodontic care and without the ability to pay. This year we had the unique opportunity to provide service through a CCMP event as it was happening. However, first we had to complete an orientation session to get trained on what
we were doing. At this training session, we joined up with a few Dartmouth College students who would be volunteering with our group at the CCMP service event the following day.

Stevens led our training Friday night. She is a fulltime volunteer organizer with CCMP and is currently the president of its Board of Directors. To begin our training, Stevens told us about the mission of CCMP and its grassroots strategy to fight local healthcare disparities. She explained that CCMP has built a free-of-charge preventive medical benefit involving volunteer physicians, dentists and other medical professionals. It’s an organization based on the belief that comprehensive medical care is a right that should be provided regardless of ability to pay. The organization is entirely volunteer-run from top to bottom and no fees are ever charged. CCMP does not accept government funding or any other funding source that could influence the course of the organization. Members of CCMP cherish this independence and find it essential to working for change.

Founded in 1973 on Long Island, CCMP was born of the struggles of doctors and concerned members of the eastern Long Island community to provide health care for agricultural workers with no health benefits. These workers were primarily migrant laborers from the southern U.S. and lacked health care that resulted in their contracting diseases for which they were unable to afford adequate
treatment. In 1974, incidents of active tuberculosis in epidemic proportions were discovered on the farm labor camps and CCMP implored the Suffolk County Health Department to treat it aggressively and immediately. This was met with opposition and CCMP took up the cause to fight for the Dept. of Health to provide treatment for farm workers while also organizing doctors, independently as volunteers, to provide the treatment that they could with donated resources. In the ensuing years, as treatable but untreated disease became widespread among other types of low-paid workers in metropolitan New York, CCMP set up a permanent location in Brooklyn as a base in the center of the five boroughs of New York City from which to fight disparities like these in the health care system.

Stevens went on to explain much more of their efforts throughout history. We didn’t actually pick up any skills at the training session that afternoon, but I can assure you we each left feeling inspired and ready to do something meaningful with our lives and careers. It was truly amazing to witness how much of an impact a completely volunteer organization can make.

CCMP MLK Event, A reflective piece: Community members demonstrate the value of volunteerism through medical education

By: Fernando Vazquez, Chris Louie, and Spencer McFarlane

Listening intently, Sylvia Gonzales, a registered nurse and community member attending
CCMP’s annual medical education and information session, asked a punctuated question: “Can you please talk more about preventing diabetes?” Dr. Kaesha Guerrier, a family physician and CCMP board member focuses the theme of her presentation that resonates beyond the local community; “Look around the room. Who do you see here? We’re talking about your spouses, uncles, brothers and sisters,” she states, and integrates the importance of lifestyle and diet with health screening and regular clinical visits and their impact on chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease. Readily accessible and practical information that positively impacts health maintenance and lifestyle was the order of the day. The introductory session ended with a potent message of being proactive with health maintenance, mindful of supporting family and friends, and how to remain engaged in the local health community. Not only were these critical ideas applicable to the audience, they were aligned with the broader CCMP ethos of community engagement and accessible health services.

The Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals (CCMP) held their annual free community medical education and information session in Brooklyn’s south side PACPLEX. The session attracted dozens of volunteers, some of whom traveled from as far as New Hampshire and California. Amidst locals attending Zumba and swim classes, nurses and physicians provided basic health screens, resources for follow-up, and information for people who wish to be more engaged with the local health community. The annual event and its health screens aim to improve the well-being of the community, and also serve as an important opportunity for CCMP to recruit volunteers and bolster their grassroots initiative of providing health services for those in need. Entirely volunteer run, the event reflected the CCMP philosophy of banding together to provide collective solutions to current problems in community health care. These free-of-charge preventive medical resources aid uninsured and under-insured workers and their
families, while serving as a broader narrative advocating for more equitable and affordable health policies. The strong emphasis on education attracts many to CCMP.

At first sight, Melvin Anderson, a very fit 32-year-old, does not appear to be a wise target for CCMP’s medical information campaign. However, Melvin stated that today he learned that one shouldn’t “push their heart too much when exercising.” Prior to today, Melvin consulted the internet in search of an answer, but there seemed to be a controversy. Faced with conflicting information on the internet, Melvin reported that he essentially believed that there was “no limit” on heart rate when it came to exercise, and in fact, the ideal may be to keep the heart rate as maximally high as one can for as long as one can maintain it. Melvin was finally assured that his heart rate should not exceed 160 beats per minute and does not need to be sustained at such an elevated rate for Melvin’s health goals. Witnessing this transfer of information from health professionals to community member is precisely what Elaine Herbig came to see.

As a first year Columbia Nursing student and future Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Elaine told us she participated in today’s event because she cares about the community and wants to incorporate what she learns into her future career as a practicing FNP. Today she witnessed the fruits of a ground campaign that included advertising in churches, businesses, and by word of mouth. She was not only able to get some extra practice screening patients, but also shadow CCMP’s health care professionals, taking note of the style and approach used when interacting with the community. Another volunteer, Cynthia Hurtado, is a senior at Hunter College who has a desire to help people lead healthier lives, but does not have a taste for medicine. Understanding Cynthia’s motivations, her college counselor suggested she put her Spanish major with a concentration in Translation and Interpretation to use as an intern with CCMP.
The Urban Health Scholars are a group of students from Dartmouth’s Geisel School of Medicine. The group of twelve is comprised of first and second year students who are passionate about serving underrepresented and disenfranchised populations in the urban setting. This is their second year volunteering with CCMP. The students hail from many different backgrounds, including teachers from New York City’s public education system and documentary film makers. Together these students use their unique experiences to influence the way they deliver services to those who need them most.

Conclusion

Once again, the Urban Health Scholars had an exciting and informative immersion trip to NYC. 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. Furthermore engaging other medical students passionate about urban underserved communities and undergraduate students provided an enriched experience for all. 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