

Making a World of Difference

Jefferson School of Population Health

Summer Seminar

July 16, 2009

This year's Summer Seminar was the first one organized under the auspices of the new Jefferson School of Population Health (JSPH). The program was focused on the mantra of the new school: "Making a World of Difference in Health Care."

David B. Nash, MD, MBA, JSPH's founding dean, opened the morning by welcoming Michael Vergare, MD, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs at Thomas Jefferson University. Dr. Vergare expressed his excitement over the type of important and relevant programming offered by JSPH to develop leaders to guide the industry during this time of change.

Dr. Nash shared his vision of JSPH as an institution that is part of the solution to problems with the healthcare system. He reviewed the main goals of the seminar: to review the school's progress as it prepares to welcome its inaugural class and to reinforce a systems approach to healthcare.

Dr. Caroline Golab, JSPH Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, opened the official program by providing an overview of the school's mission, goals, and academic programs. She explained how its programs dovetail with the National Quality Forum's National Priorities and Goals, such as engaging patients and their families in healthcare decisions; reducing healthcare-related injury; and improving patient-provider communication. Dr. Golab succinctly stated, "We must fundamentally change the ways in which we deliver care. And that's what we're all about."

The panel of speakers included the directors of the respective Master's programs: Rob Simmons, DrPH, MPH, for the Master of Public Health (MPH) program; JoAnne Reifsnnyder, PhD, for the Health Policy (MS-HP) and Chronic Care Management (MS-CCM) programs; Susan DesHarnais, PhD, MPH, for the Healthcare Quality and Safety (MS-HQS) program; and Laura Pizzi, PharmD, MPH, for the proposed Applied Health Economics (MS-AHE) program. The audience also heard from the Assistant Dean of Continuing Professional Education, Alexis

Skoufalos, EdD, and Associate Dean of Research, Neil I. Goldfarb.

Dr. Rob Simmons, director of the MPH program, defined public health as "an interdisciplinary field of study and practice with a primary goal to prevent illness, disease, and injury and to promote and protect health while supporting human rights and social justice." The mission of the MPH program is to "enhance communities through the development of public health leaders... through practice and service." The program trains students based on specific public health competencies and core public health values. Students can practice in a variety of settings from federal, state, and local public health agencies and non-governmental health organizations to educational institutions and international health organizations. Dr. Simmons concluded by announcing that JSPH's MPH program won re-accreditation for seven more years.

Health Policy, as described by Dr. JoAnne Reifsnnyder, is "where the rubber hits the road." She explained that there is "a lot about healthcare that is exemplary but it is often obscured by what is dysfunctional." The systems approach to healthcare was built into the JSPH, MS-HP curriculum. Dr. Reifsnnyder believes this distinguishes it from other health policy programs in that it was designed to enable students to master applicable, "real-world" skills.

Dr. Susan DesHarnais pointed out that JSPH's MS-HQS program is one of only two in the country. Jefferson's program is unique in its focus on practicing healthcare professionals. Dr. DesHarnais' passion is to ensure that healthcare workers are trained in quality and safety. Training professionals to better communicate with each other and with patients is a key component of improving healthcare.

Dr. Reifsnnyder again took the podium to describe the Master of Chronic Care Management, a program in development which will be the *first* of its kind in the nation. Management of care is crucial to meaningful health care reform, and is achieved by *designing systems* that will help manage chronic illnesses.

JSPH faculty are engaged in literally writing the textbook for this course, tentatively titled, *Population Health Management*.

The last program that was discussed was a proposed Master of Applied Healthcare Economics. Dr. Laura Pizzi reinforced that understanding costs is an essential part of healthcare. This new program would focus on "applied" health economics rather than "traditional" as other, similar programs do. Dr. Pizzi described the program as one that will prepare "professionals to shape health policy through applied health economic analyses."

Dr. Alexis Skoufalos spoke about the importance of continuing professional education. She reminded the audience of the need for developing "lifelong learners" and insisted that it is crucial "for leaders to remain actively engaged in [the learning] process in order to remain competitive." Dr. Skoufalos stressed that JSPH's continuing professional education programs create a "bridge between academic and research programs and include the real-world application of key concepts."

To complete the circle that is the JSPH mission, Neil Goldfarb emphasized the significance of research. The JSPH research team has developed a list of properties of an "idealized" research agenda, including items such as being innovative, impactful, and promoting inter-professional collaboration. Progress has been made in many of the areas on the list, and the research team will keep taking advantage of their current resources while looking for new opportunities.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Nash expressed his gratitude to the JSPH team and the Jefferson community for their support. He asked the audience to join him in making sure JSPH is making a difference in healthcare. ■

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