

# Evaluating and Responding to Medical Student Demand for Global Health Education

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## Introduction

With the constant interchange of people and diseases across continents, “the separation between domestic and international health problems is no longer useful.” (1) Look no further than the 80,000 refugees currently resettled in the United States for proof that health is a global phenomenon. The medical community needs to respond to the changing global landscape by training future healthcare leaders to think and act globally.

Medical students across the U.S. recognize this need with 68% of U.S. allopathic medical schools having an active student global or international health interest group. (2) Unfortunately, training opportunities lag behind student interest with only 39% of medical schools offering didactic coursework in global health. (3) To date, there have been no formalized, organized global health educational electives at Sidney Kimmel Medical College.

However, the majority of students are actively involved in at least one organization dedicated to underserved populations, cultural diversity, and public/international health, including several student-run clinics targeting refugees in Philadelphia. Working with refugee and immigrant populations provides the opportunity to do global health work locally. The purpose of this study was to capture SKMC interest in global health and assess the need for improvement in the medical college curriculum.

“As the consumers of medical education, medical students have the power to influence training opportunities - schools that do not offer global health training may soon become ‘second tier’ options for the top applicants.” (Brewer, 2009)

## Design & Methodology

A global health survey was offered to all medical students at Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC) during Spring 2014. Two hundred thirty four participants elected to complete the anonymous 27-question survey. Data collection was facilitated through a public, web-based survey program over a one-month period.

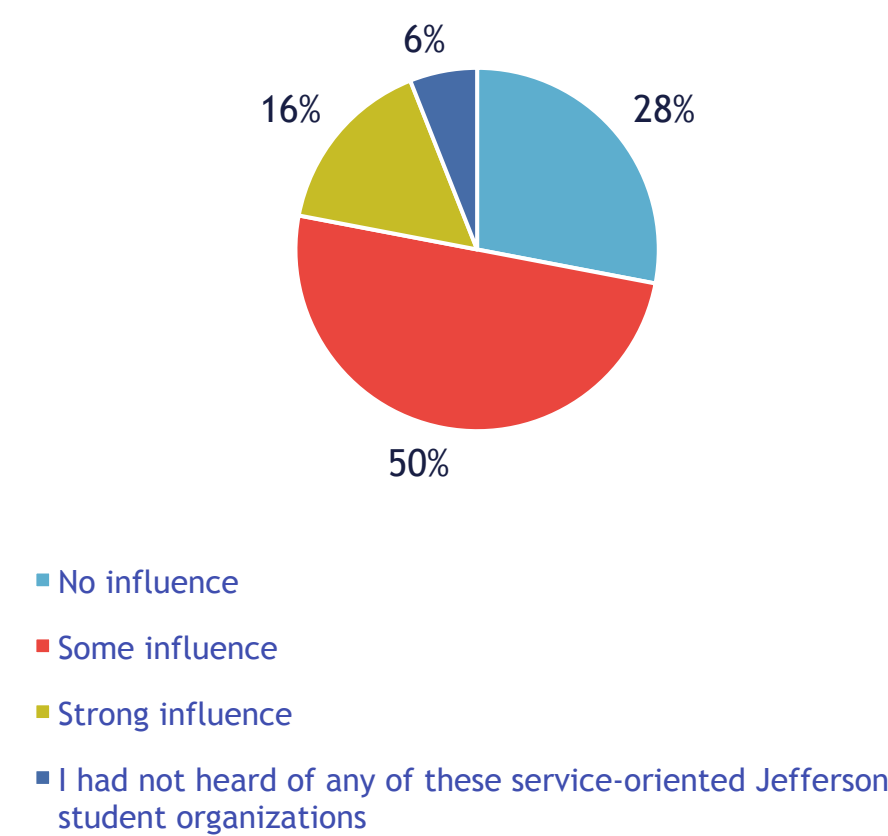


“Understanding health as a global issue provides a greater worldview for treating patients even in your own city.” (SKMC Student)

## Survey Results: Key Findings

- **Eighty four percent** of survey participants indicated either some or strong interest in receiving global health training while at Sidney Kimmel Medical College.
- **Seventy three percent** of survey respondents said that global health is important for their careers.
- Only **twelve percent** of survey participants felt that the current curriculum at SKMC provides adequate global health education.

“How much influence did the opportunity to participate in service-oriented organizations have on your decision to enroll at SKMC?”

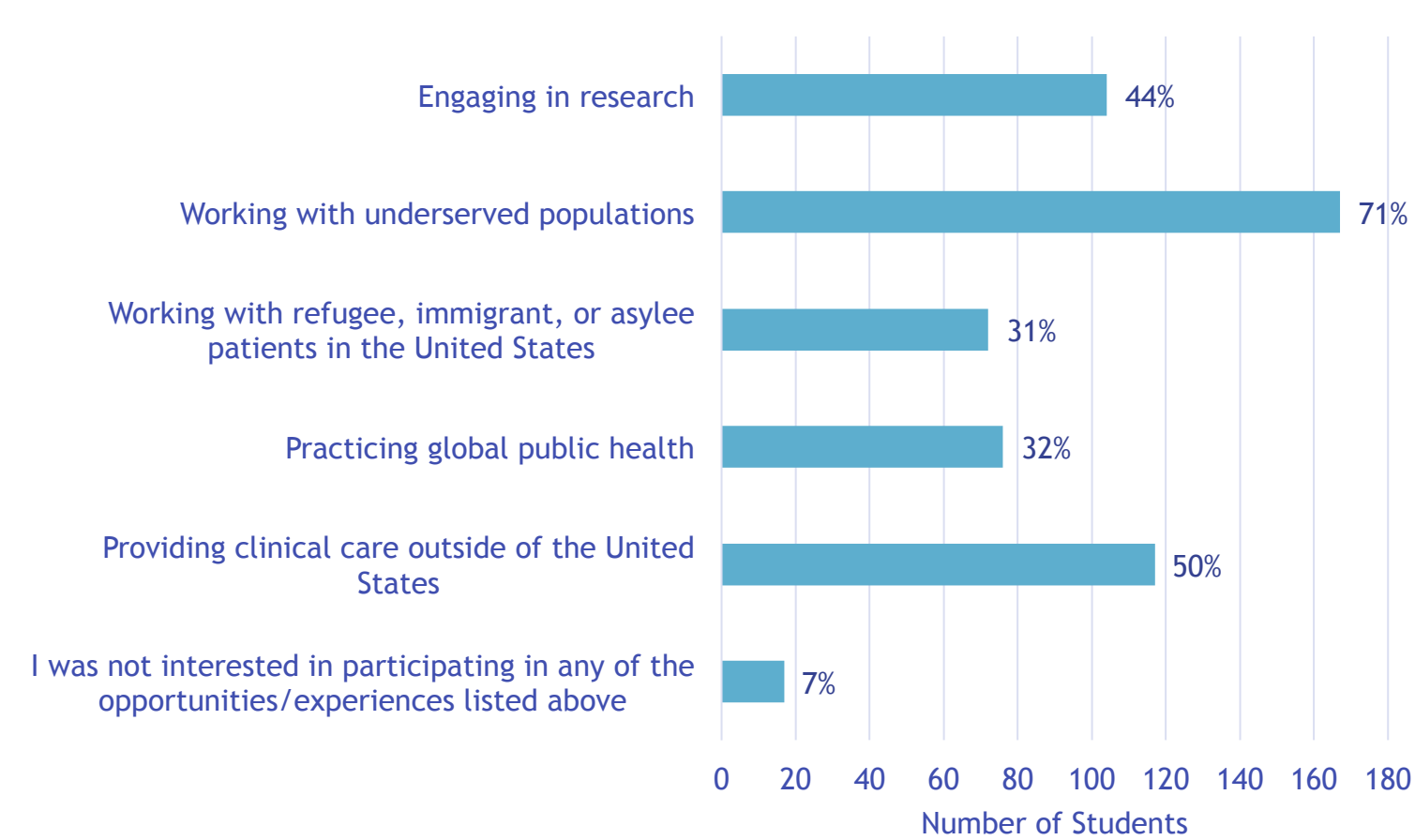


Out of 16 options, the 5 highest ranked topics to be included in global health education at SKMC were:

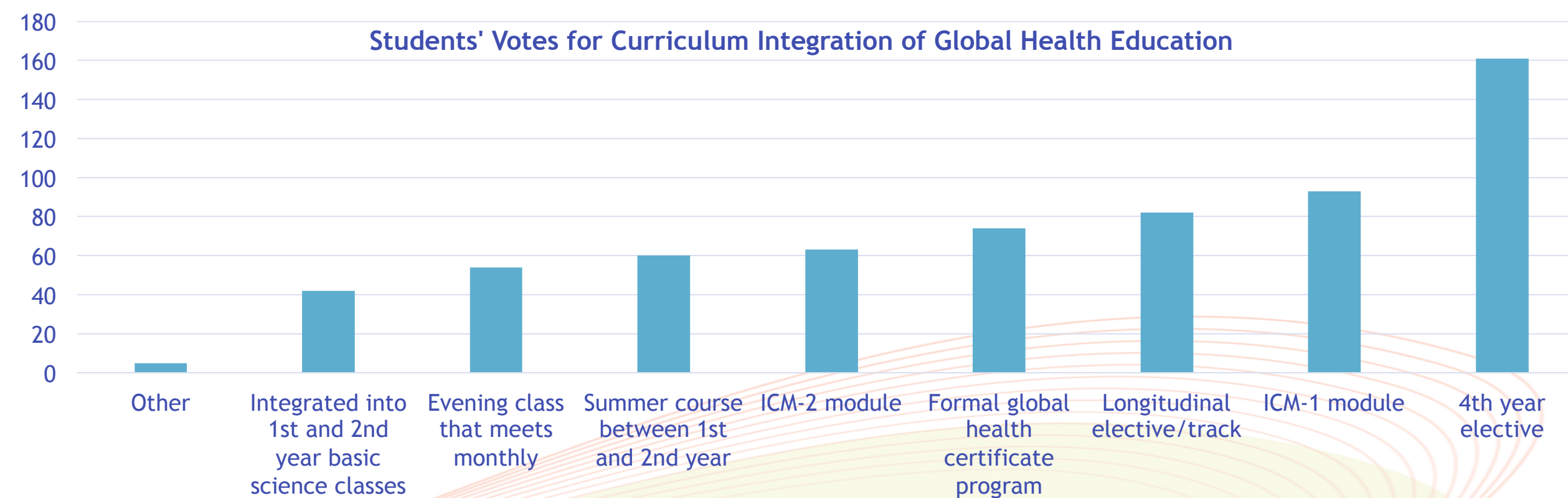
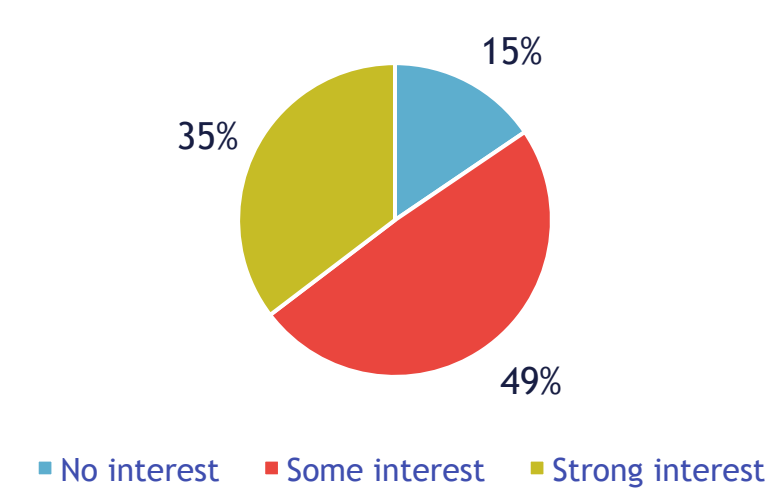
Immigrant/Refugee/Migrant Health
Travel Medicine
Communicable Disease
Clinical Medicine in Resource-Limited Settings
Disaster Relief and Complex Emergencies

“Opportunities in Global health and working with underserved populations help broaden my understanding of how we can use our training as medical doctors to help patients in various settings and from different backgrounds.” (SKMC Student)

Opportunities/experiences students were interested in pursuing when applying to SKMC



“Please rate your level of interest in obtaining elective global health training at SKMC.”



Therefore, in response to student feedback, we designed a fourth year global health elective that was approved in September 2014 at Sidney Kimmel Medical College to begin Spring of 2015.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Year Elective

### Global Health at Home: Dimension of Refugee Health

#### Goals and Objectives of Elective

- Gain exposure to global health within the local context.
- Participate in different clinical care models for refugee populations.
- Develop knowledge base in global burden of diseases and post-resettlement determinants of health in refugee/immigrant populations.
- Identify social context to individual, family, and community wellness for immigrant and refugee populations.
- Learn principles of trauma-informed clinical practice.

#### Curriculum Components

Spend at least three half-days per week working in a refugee health clinic, functioning as a full member of the office staff.

Partner with two different selected social service agencies or programs and work with them at least three half-days per week.

Participate in community-based refugee health event or program.

Participate in weekly guest seminar series on refugee health.

In consultation with faculty facilitator, develop a presentation focusing on one clinically relevant topic within refugee health. Focus areas include:

- Population-centered presentation (such as pertinent history/background of immigrants or refugee populations)
- Disease based (such as pertinent epidemiology concerns for a given populations)
- Areas of advocacy: unaccompanied minors, immigration reform, torture prevention, LGBTQ

Create outline describing a social service program available to refugees and/or immigrant populations and the program's function in the refugee health community, which will contribute to building a database of available refugee resources.

Participate and update ongoing research efforts with findings and experiences.

- Access and utilize refugee health longitudinal database
- Learn principles of Community Based Participatory Research and its applications in refugee populations

Facilitate roundtable discussion for MS1/MS2 focused on cultural sensitivity in clinical settings.

“Whether you end up practicing global medicine, working with these populations is a great way of becoming culturally competent and learning how to communicate and treat diverse patients.” (SKMC Student)



“We live in a global world, even if you don't practice medicine outside the borders of the US, you still will practice global medicine in treating refugee patients and their families, or even just practicing medicine with patients who travel often and are exposed to disease outside of the US.” (SKMC Student)

## Conclusion

The data from the Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC) student survey indicates that a strong majority value elective global health training, yet there is a perceived lack of global health content in the curriculum. The implication of this study catalyzed SKMC to add a refugee health fourth-year elective opportunity to augment students' learning experience and cultural competence; as well as improve the quality of comprehensive healthcare offered to immigrant and refugee communities. This elective will serve to incorporate global healthcare into medical education at SKMC and potentially at other medical schools in the US. Students who enroll in this elective will gain extensive exposure to the unique health challenges of refugee populations and to the network of social and healthcare services that address these needs.

“We can't effectively practice global health if we haven't learned enough about it!” (SKMC Student)

References:  
(1) Brundtland GH. Speech at United Nations Associations Global Leadership Awards. New York, USA; April 19, 2001.  
(2) Kahn OA, Guerrant R, Sanders J et al. 2013. Global health education in U.S. Medical Schools. BMC Medical Education 2013, 13:3.  
(3) International Opportunities in Medical Education: Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research, Washington DC (USA); Philadelphia, PA (USA) and the Association of American Medical Colleges; 2010.