

Summer Institute in Public Health at Lankenau Medical Center

Recognizing the increasing popularity in the study of Public Health at the undergraduate level, the Center for Public Health Research (CPHR) based at the Lankenau Medical Center inaugurated a collegiate internship program in summer 2011. Throughout June and July, CPHR was home to 17 highly talented and motivated students representing Haverford, Bryn Mawr, Villanova, MIT, Penn State, Rochester, and Emory. Located in the Lankenau Institute for Medical Research (LIMR), CPHR launched 8 major center projects with the help of this hardworking group. Evaluated as part of all projects were issues of healthcare disparity and identifying the social determinants of health that may be causative factors. These are areas of very significant interest to the present younger generation and, in many cases, is the driving force for their participation in summer programs and exploration of future careers in healthcare.

The projects reflect the diversity in Public Health. Divided into small groups, students were paired with physician, nursing, and administrative mentors throughout Lankenau. The projects, coordinated through CPHR, focused on disease management and prevention, and involved issues of tobacco usage and cessation, child safety, and pulmonary disease. Aspects of increasing accessibility to screening mammography for the detection of early breast cancer were evaluated in conjunction with the LMC Cancer Center. Other students were teamed with LMC nurses and social workers as they helped to implement improved discharge planning and transitional care models designed to decrease hospital readmissions. And another small group evaluated a potential screening program to detect young athletes at potentially high risk for sudden cardiac death.

All 17 students were assigned one summer-long project in which aspects of undergraduate public health programs were discussed on a weekly basis. In particular, student input was sought pertaining to ways to build and strengthen relationships between the Main Line Health System and undergraduate institutions based upon a campus-community partnership model in public health. Such a model involves students in experiential learning projects throughout the year based at Main Line Health and co-mentored with collegiate faculty. This model was particularly attractive to students at Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Villanova due to the location of their institutions on the Main Line.

Project work was the foundation of the summer experience. It was supplemented by field trips related to public health and a comprehensive weekly lecture series sponsored and provided by the Jefferson School of Population Health at the direction of Dean David Nash. In June the group visited the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and met with its director, Dr. George Wolhreich, followed by a guided tour of the world-famous Mutter Museum. July's visit to the Jefferson School of Population Health included a lunch meeting with Dr. Nash and discussion of current public health issues and advice on launching careers in healthcare.

Throughout the entire program, summer interns benefited from a comprehensive lecture series devoted to public health that was largely provided by faculty of the Jefferson School of Population Health. Designed jointly by JSPH's Associate Dean Caroline Golab and CPHR's director, Stanton Miller, the lecture series served as an introductory core curriculum to the field. Topics ranged from ethical conduct of research, principles of population health,

health informatics to issues of pediatric water safety and maternal/child health research. Faculty from JSPH gave of their own time by traveling to the Main Line to deliver the lectures onsite at LMC. This proved to be a very popular component of the program.

The summer program concluded with oral presentations of group projects to the Main Line Health community in a half day program held at LMC, followed by a farewell luncheon. A capacity crowd at the Annenberg Center for Medical Education was treated to a series of high-quality presentations, all of which had significant practical relevance to the mission of the health system. Projects ranged from a study of local water supply in conjunction with the Pulmonary Medicine division to increasing compliance rates for screening mammography and colonoscopy in an uninsured/underinsured population.

Overall this program was viewed as highly successful. It provided an opportunity to introduce careers in healthcare to a whole new generation of young people. The combination of projects, field trips, and lectures proved quite popular with the students. One student described his summer experience as "life-changing." And, most importantly, projects launched in the summer are now growing and continuing throughout the course of the year. Also notable was the successful collaboration of CPHR and JSPH. Plans are for this program to continue next summer. It is hoped that funding will be attained so as to provide stipends for students and assist in even greater program design and staff support. ■

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