

Bidirectional Global Health Education: The RVCP-Jeff HEALTH Exchange Program

In 2005, Thomas Jefferson University (TJU) medical students and faculty from the Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) started the Rwanda Health and Healing Project, a community oriented health project in two rural villages in Rwanda. This project has been previously described in the *Population Health Matters* article, "Partnerships for Health in Rwandan Genocide Survivors Village: The Rwanda Health and Healing Project and Barefoot Artists."¹ Since its inception, over 80 students and faculty from TJU have traveled to Rwanda to work with these villages on a variety of public health and income generating projects.² As part of this program, a partnership was formed with the Rwanda Village Concept Project (RVCP), a Rwandan medical student-driven public health and community development organization. In 2007, a group of dedicated Jefferson students from the student organization Jeff HEALTH worked with faculty from the DFCM to establish an exchange program to bring RVCP medical students to Jefferson. Through the Jeff HEALTH-RVCP partnership, Jefferson selects 2-3 Rwandan students per year (through a rigorous essay and interview process) for 2-month long TJU rotations focused on primary care, community health, and public health. Since 2007, 21 Rwandan students have successfully completed this exchange program.

The curriculum for this exchange has become increasingly formalized over the past 7 years in response to changes in medical curriculum requirements in Rwanda and feedback from participants. Directed by an interdisciplinary group of resident and faculty global health clinical mentors across the Departments

of Pediatrics, Family and Community Medicine, Emergency Medicine, and Obstetrics and Gynecology, the current curriculum is designed to introduce the students to the many dimensions of clinical practice, health systems, and education in the United States (Table 1). The main areas of educational focus include chronic disease prevention and management, clinical skill development, care of underserved and vulnerable

populations, research/academic scholarship, comparative health systems, and physician advocacy. In addition, DFCM faculty are also working with medical educators in Rwanda to better align the exchange curriculum with the National University of Rwanda's required community and population health curriculum. Upon return to Rwanda, the participating exchange students are expected to maintain leadership roles in the RVCP,

Table 1. RVCP-Jeff HEALTH Exchange Program Curriculum

Educational Focus	Curricular Component/Clinical Experience
Chronic Disease Prevention and Management	Outpatient family medicine clinic
	Diabetes Group Visit Program (DISH)
	TJU Center for Urban Health community Screening programs
	JFMA Home Visit Program
Clinical Skill Development	Clinical skills training sessions at Robert & Dorothy Rector Clinical Skills & Simulation Center
	Inpatient bedside rounds
	Obstetric Ultrasound Clinic
Underserved Care Vulnerable Populations	Jeff HOPE Homeless Outreach Student Clinic
	Medical Street Outreach with Project HOME
	St. Elizabeth's Community Wellness Center
	Refugee Health Partners Student Clinic
	LGBTQ Care at Mazzoni Center
Research/Academic Scholarship	Seminars: Basic Biostatistics Program Development and Evaluation Community Based Participatory Research Methods
	Exposure to new and emerging fields of specialty care: Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine
	Comparing inpatient and outpatient models of care
Physician Advocacy	Pediatrics Advocacy Café

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provide monthly monitoring of Jeff HEALTH village public health programs, and mentor TJU students visiting Rwanda.

To date, 17 students who have completed this exchange program have graduated from the National University of Rwanda to practice in the fields of Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Obstetrics/Gynecology, and Psychiatry; in addition, several of the students have completed advanced degrees in public health, clinical research, and health policy. These students now populate the private, public, and non-profit health sector of Rwanda--taking on leadership roles as clinicians, researchers, educators, and health administrators. The expanding personal and professional networks that have emerged as a result of this unique program of undergraduate global health education have provided the foundation for an important model of interdisciplinary peer mentorship across multiple levels of learners. We are currently in the process of evaluating the impact of this program and mentorship network through surveys and in-depth interviews.

In 2011, faculty from the DFCM began developing a clinical program in Rwanda for advanced medical students, residents, and faculty from TJU. Focusing on the principles of reciprocal education, this program is built on the RVCP-Jeff HEALTH peer mentorship networks. Through these networks, members of the TJU community have the opportunity to expand beyond the village-based public health programs and work clinically with the exchange RVCP graduates at different institutions within the Rwandan health sector, thereby providing a bidirectional global health education experience.

The RVCP-Jeff HEALTH exchange program exposes students from both the United States and Rwanda to the practice of healthcare across health systems, institutions, and cultures. Importantly, this type of collaborative, bidirectional program in global health education has the potential to build local and international global health capacity in a way that is fundamentally more equitable, interprofessional, and relevant to the future practice of global health.

At this time, this program is dependent on fundraising and donations. If you would like to donate to this program, please contact Ellen.Plumb@jefferson.edu.

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