

Medical Education through Community Service

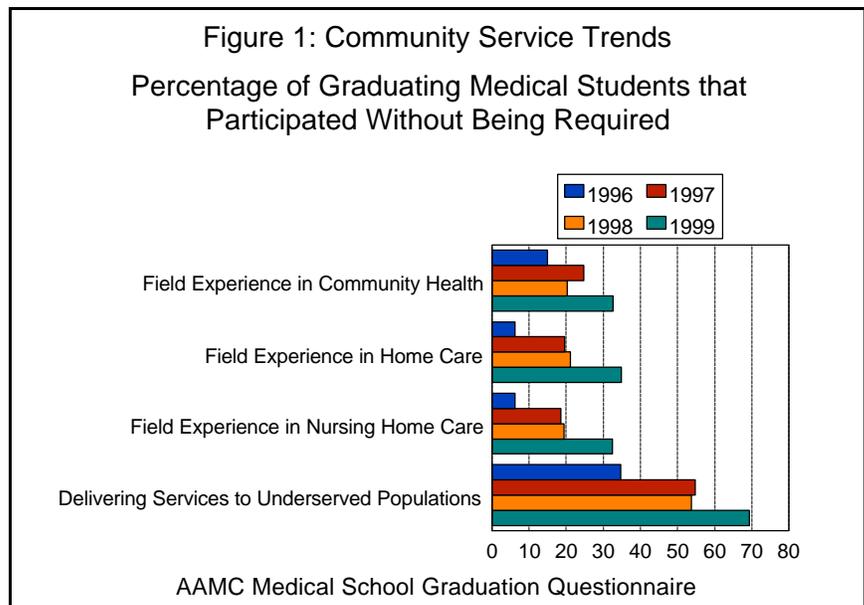
Each year medical students are involved in many types of community service activities. These include a variety of field experiences, educating high school and other students about the health professions, and providing health education (see Figures 1 & 2). Many of these activities are voluntary and AAMC's Medical School Graduation Questionnaire (GQ) shows that these voluntary activities have been on the rise in recent years.

Student outreach activities are the result of both student initiated projects and community-based programs established by medical schools and hospitals throughout the country. Such programs target both rural and urban areas in need of health services. In addition to these local efforts, the AAMC and the Pfizer Foundation for Community Service have recently formed a partnership that promises to continue the trend of increasing community service by medical students.

Student Initiated Projects

Medical students at the University of Colorado initiated the Salvation Army/Globeville Clinic. For several years, this primary care clinic has cooperated with a six-month residential urban alcohol and drug rehabilitation program. Students are involved in all aspects of the clinic's operation, including providing primary care to the community's underserved population.

- Voluntary participation in programs where medical students delivered services to underserved populations doubled between 1996 and 1999.
- In 1999, over 69% of medical students delivered services to underserved populations on a voluntary basis.
- In 1998, over one half (55%) of medical students were either required or voluntarily participated in rural community clerkship, while 44.5% performed an inner-city community clerkship.



In 1998, two medical students at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine partnered with two local Nashville area high school science teachers to produce an educational CD-ROM, entitled "ImmunoTV." This product teaches students in grades 7-10 about immunology. These high school students can choose from eight different "channels" and learn about a host of topics such as bacteria, viruses, and allergies. Since ImmunoTV was developed, over 300 CD-ROMs have been distributed free of charge to schools nationwide.

Medical School Programs for Rural Communities

The University of Minnesota Medical School has established a community-based education project called the Rural Physician Associate Program (RPAP) in order to address the shortage of primary care physicians in Minnesota. Since 1971, the RPAP has involved a total of over 100 teaching sites and 900 medical students. During the program, each medical student typically performs 250 history and physical exams, first assists on 200 general surgical procedures, and delivers 32 babies. The program, which involves video and distance learning technology to enhance students' educational experiences, has proven effective throughout the years. Of the former students now in practice, 61% are in rural communities and 64% remain in Minnesota. In addition, 76% of these students are in primary care, with 67% choosing family practice.

The University of Illinois College of Medicine also developed a program to address the shortage of rural physicians. The Rural Medical Education Program (RMED) was created to increase the number and improve the distribution of family physicians practicing in rural

Illinois. The curricular content of the program is built around four dimensions of community involvement: community-oriented primary care, sociocultural awareness in the care of patients, informed and appropriate use of the community's health resources, and community participation and assimilation. In the first three years of medical school, students attend monthly seminars that focus on public health concepts as they relate to the rural setting. In the final year of the program, students participate in a 16-week rural preceptorship focusing on community-oriented primary care.

Medical School Programs for Urban Communities

Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, New York, is Albert Einstein College of Medicine's major affiliated hospital. The Center provides medical services to the 1.2 million local urban residents. Each year more than 1,000 residents and 300 medical students participate in the community-oriented programs sponsored by Montefiore. Among those programs is a primary care network that reaches into some of the poorest communities of the Bronx. The network, which is the principal training site for the residency program in social medicine, serves 18,000 women and children in the WIC program, 1,300 HIV-positive patients, and homeless shelters where 3,000 receive care.

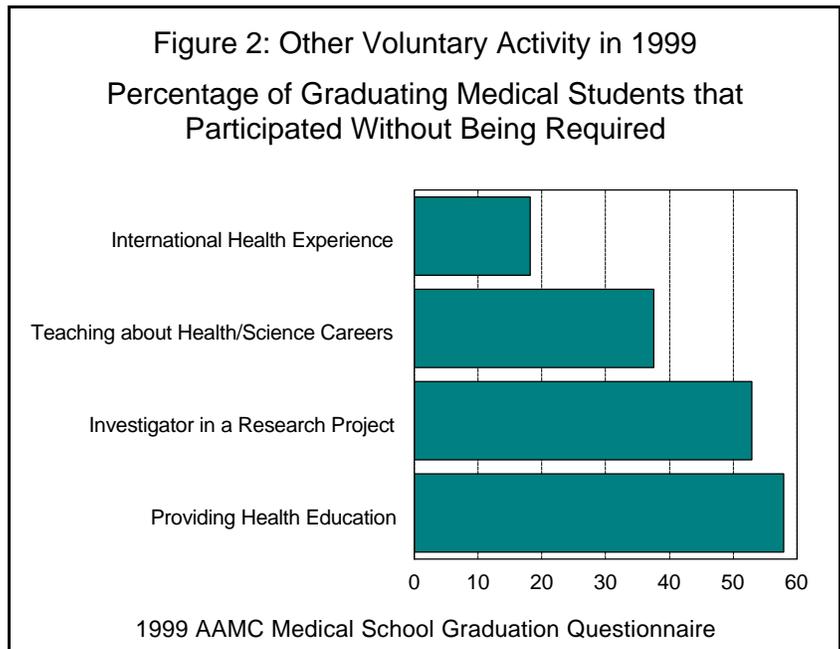
The University of Miami also involves medical students in serving its urban population. Freshman and sophomore medical students work at more than 70 clinical sites on a weekly basis. They give physical exams and assist with compliance and follow-up issues. In their third year, students complete a required one-week rotation at the Camillus Health Concern, an ambulatory clinic located at a homeless shelter that serves 25,000 annually.

Other Programs

Lehigh Valley Hospital, a clinical campus of Penn State, has developed a program entitled "Medical Education in a Community Model of Care." The program emphasizes the new roles health practitioners should master in a contemporary practice setting. The seven pillars of this approach are health practitioner as community servant, community leader, clinical innovator, champion of quality, health advocate, teacher, and learner.

AAMC and Pfizer Partnership

The AAMC will manage a community service fund established by the Pfizer Medical Humanities Initiative. This fund will make possible the awarding of grants to



encourage the development of student-initiated services and programs to the community. As part of this Caring for Community program, medical schools are eligible to receive support for community service oriented projects in which they explore new ways to serve their local communities. Eligible programs may constitute promoting awareness about sexually transmitted diseases; vaccination programs; or other areas where there is an unmet health need within the community.

A unique aspect of the Caring for Community program is its focus on projects initiated, developed, and run primarily by medical students. While faculty and institutional involvement is an integral component of sustaining community service efforts, the ultimate goal of this grant program is to encourage students to identify untapped avenues of community service. The program promises to help students translate ideas into meaningful service by contributing the necessary start-up money.

Conclusion

Community service continues to be an important benefit that medical schools, teaching hospitals, and students provide, above and beyond their regular function. Given the trends of student involvement and the opportunities on the horizon, it seems that such programs will continue to thrive in the future.

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