

School: Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

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Collaborating organizations: Illinois Department of Public Health Office of Rural Health; Veterans' Affairs National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention; University of North Carolina School of Medicine; Paul Simon Public Policy Institute; Illinois Governor's Rural Affairs Council; Sangamon, Macon, Adams, Jackson and Macoupin Counties' (Illinois) Public Health Departments, Physician Assistant Program and Department of Health Education & Recreation, and Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; Public Health Department, University of Illinois at Springfield; Illinois Rural Health Association

Project Description:

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine (SIUSOM) is a community-based medical school created with its explicit mission "to assist the people of central and southern Illinois in meeting their health care needs through education, patient care and research." Curriculum in the first two years is entirely problem-based, and presented in a small group format. Third year consists of traditional required clerkship rotations, with a two-week required segment in Doctoring/Medical Humanities and the fourth year consists of electives, a required rotation in neurology that may be taken in the third year, and another two-week required segment in Doctoring/Medical Humanities.

Prior to the RMPHEC grant, population health and prevention (PHP) activities were largely confined to the second year curriculum with 3-5 hours of curriculum time in each of four organ-system-based units. A few third-year clerkship seminars focused on access to health care for women and children, and some fourth-year electives were available as well. With the advent of the RMPHEC project at SIUSOM, the following have been accomplished:

- Negotiations with basic science and clinical faculty have resulted in development of 4 hours of curriculum time in the first year, divided across three organ-system-based units, focusing on "Introduction to Population Health and Prevention," sensitivity and specificity, and population perspectives on obesity.
- A standardized "package" of PHP activities, amounting to 5.5 hours in each of four curriculum units in the second year has been developed. The "package" consists of resource sessions (lecture/discussions), a Critical Appraisal activity in which students are given a clear clinical question and then work with library staff to do a strategic literature search in order to answer that clinical question, a Critical Appraisal Grand Rounds in which issues about the search strategy and answers to the clinical question are discussed, and a Population Health Roundtable experience, in which students do a "hands-on" small group experience using PHP techniques to address yet another aspect of the clinical issue that is the "theme" for that unit. "Theme" topics include:
 - Hematology/Infection/Immunology Unit: Vaccine Preventable Illness and Outbreak Investigations (Roundtable experience: Pertussis Outbreak Investigation)
 - Cardiovascular/Respiratory/Renal Unit: Cholesterol screening, Characteristics of Good Screening Programs (Roundtable experience: Design a community-based cholesterol screening program with a fixed budget)

- Neuromuscular and Behavior Unit: Stroke and Head Injury Prevention (Roundtable experience: Head Injury Prevention Policy – define target entity, i.e., legislative, judicial, administrative, and develop one-page issue advocacy handout)
- Endocrine/Reproductive/Gastrointestinal Unit: Menopause and Hormone Replacement Therapy (Using the WHI Study) (Roundtable experience: provide patient education to a standardized patient regarding decision to take or forego hormone replacement therapy in menopause)
- In the third year, the clerkship seminars on access to health care for women (OB/GYN) and children (Pediatrics) continue, and a new seminar has been developed for Psychiatry which presents cost-effectiveness analysis of a variety of treatments for depression. The Department of Internal Medicine has welcomed us to pilot “Population Health Ward Rounds,” in which PHP faculty join the team rounding in the hospital, choose a PHP-related learning issue for students, residents and faculty to consider, and lead a discussion about that topic during or after rounds. Family and Community Medicine is following our significant development of student skills in Critical Appraisal by asking students to develop a “clinical question,” design a literature search strategy to answer that question, and then execute the search, review the literature using accepted evidence-based methodologies and present their findings and recommendations to their peers at the end of the clerkship. Discussions are underway with the Surgery Clerkship about potential PHP activities in that venue as well.
- Fourth-year elective offerings have been increased, and a four-week elective in clinical epidemiology is under development with the State Epidemiologist at Illinois Department of Public Health and members of multiple departments within SIUSOM. An elective “pathway” is being developed which will serve as a guide to students who wish to strategically plan their elective year to foster pursuit of a career in public health or preventive medicine.

Evaluation of our curricular efforts is underway, and includes qualitative and quantitative methodologies as well as feedback from a “real-time” quality circle of students and faculty who respond rapidly to suggestions from anyone involved with the curriculum. Student activity groups are supported in bringing outside speakers, and multiple texts have been acquired for our permanent library collection.

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