Community Health Fellowship Program

Program Overview

The Community Health Fellowship Program (CHFP) introduces first-year medical students to community-based participatory research, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration as a means for addressing community health problems in underserved communities.

Goals and Objectives

The focus of the experience is to develop relationships between the UT Southwestern Medical Center Community, and community-based health and social services delivery organizations in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The partnerships are designed to assist community-based organizations in identifying the needs of those they serve, investigating how well the needs are being met, evaluating additional resource needs, and providing information that can be used to obtain and coordinate additional resources. All work is done in a way that benefits the participating organization, while teaching medical students the value of collaboration to achieve optimal health outcomes among the underserved.

The Community Health Fellowship Program annually offers a small group of exceptional medical students annually an opportunity to:

1) Address the health care needs of inner-city and at-risk underserved patients in a community-based setting,

2) Obtain real world clinical experience treating at-risk patients under the direction of a mentor, and

3) Gain applied research knowledge through participating in a didactic research training curriculum combined with a community health agency-based research project.

This fellowship is offered for nine weeks during the summer, and provides a stipend. There are supplemental sessions required in April and May to define community projects and equip students with basic HIPAA research and human subjects training prior to the summer program. A limited amount of additional funding is also available for presenting research findings at national or regional professional meetings and conferences.

For more information, please contact:

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Examples of Recent Projects

• National data indicates that less than half of children ages 2-18 eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables daily. Fruit and vegetable (F/V) consumption has been associated with decreased incidence and mortality of chronic diseases. Study objectives were to determine: 1) the baseline F/V consumption, healthy eating behaviors, and self-efficacy of families participating in the BrighterBites program 2) associations between psychosocial variables and F/V consumption.

• The primary aims of this study were: 1) Assess the baseline nutritional literacy (NL), nutritional knowledge (NK), and health/weight perception of food-bank clients from Crossroads Community Service (CCS) and North Dallas Shared Ministries (NDSM) in the city of Dallas. 2) To determine if there is a difference in NL, NK and health/weight perception between food stamp program (FSP) participants vs. non-participants.

• Childhood obesity has rapidly increased over the last 30 years. The KidsEat! program is a theater program for adolescents focusing on healthy eating and nutrition awareness that was developed to impact eating behaviors and understanding about nutrition. The objective of this study was to evaluate changes in nutritional knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy from the KidsEat! program to improve future activities.

• There are an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. No organized state or federal program currently exists to provide health care for this population; instead, access to care is covered by an amalgam of non-profit hospitals and clinics. The objective of this study was to determine barriers to medical care experienced by undocumented construction workers in Dallas.

• Epilepsy is the most common neurological condition in adolescence. As they approach adulthood, CMC provides transition education to epilepsy patients and families, encouraging them to seek care with an adult neurologist. Primary aims of the study: 1) whether or not former patients have seen adult neurologists, 2) the barriers to finding an adult provider, 3) the facilitators to finding an adult provider, and 4) what CMC can do to improve its transition services.

• The goal of this project was to increase the vaccine coverage rate among homeless youth (under the age of 18) at the Center of Hope (COH). At the end of the study, the existing vaccination protocol was improved and a caregiver education program was implemented. The immunization rate among children sheltered at COH improved from a baseline of 35.71% to 52.38% by the end of month two.

• Low-income, food insecure populations have a high prevalence of chronic disease and catering emergency food resources to those with risk factors for such diseases is an essential step in disease prevention, applicable to food pantries servicing similar populations across the nation. The goal of this project was to examine if NDSM’s food pantry matched the healthcare needs of clients with chronic diseases.

• The specific aims of this study were to determine the shared medical appointment (SMA) team’s perceptions on 1) the quality of care delivered through an SMA, and 2) the feasibility of implementing an SMA in a primary care setting. This study was conducted at all eight of the Parkland Community Oriented Primary Care (COOPC) clinics located in the Dallas, TX area.