

Community Medicine Elective

Program Overview

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this elective is to provide students with practice-oriented and/or service-oriented learning opportunities related to community medicine. Students learn about the types and functions of the formal and informal medical, public health, and social support programs involved in community health care and community health improvement. Students learn the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR). The course is designed to be individualized to students' specific population-medicine interests, and can be tailored to experiences in local, state, national, or international health care settings and agencies. Six course objectives include:

1. Teach students the biopsychosocial approach to medical care and how the approach is applied in the determinants of health model.
2. Focus on health promotion and disease prevention (HPDP) in the community-based setting and as applied to populations of patients.
3. Demonstrate an understanding for the need for protection of human subjects when working with vulnerable populations in the community.
4. Train students on the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR)
5. Enhance students' understanding of the relationship between culture and health, and improve their skills in delivering culturally sensitive health care services.
6. Expose students to the social, financial, and ethical aspects of limiting and promoting access to health care for vulnerable populations.

Design and Implementation

Didactic Training

In a one-on-one instructional setting, the subject context is clinical preventive medicine, with a primary focus on the prevention and early detection of diseases. An effort is made to emphasize community health, and the role of the community in contributing to the health of individuals. Other important concepts include evidence-based practice, population-based medicine, and community-oriented primary care (COPC). The student will rotate through training experiences, for example, that go beyond clinical medicine and encompass environmental, public health, and multidisciplinary efforts to improve the health status of groups of individuals.

Special emphasis is placed on participating in service-learning opportunities. Service learning refers to a structured learning experience that combines community-oriented service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection. Students are expected, therefore, to provide direct community-focused service, learn about the context in which the service is provided, and understand the connection between the service and their academic coursework. *Specific didactic requirements are listed in Section C: Student Responsibilities.*

Clinical Experience

The student will be assigned or will select a supervising preceptor at the appropriate facility and may work directly with a range of public health, social service, allied health and/or medical care specialists. *Specific clinical requirements are listed in Section C: Student Responsibilities.*

Student Responsibilities

The elective can be tailored to enable the student to pursue special interests in community medicine such as epidemiologic methods, health system evaluation, health policy, and regulation of public health service entities. Specific experiences are agreed upon with the course director in advance, although revisions and/or additions to the elective can also be discussed at any time during the rotation. The student is accountable to both the on-site preceptor(s) and the course coordinator(s).

Students will be required to participate in one (1) didactic lecture offered during their elective. Students will have the opportunity to attend a Community Medicine lecture offered to Family Medicine residents each month. Students may also participate in other Grand Rounds lectures in order to fulfill this requirement. Students will be required to complete the following two (2) online trainings as required by the UT Southwestern IRB: 1) Human Subjects Protections and 2) HIPAA Research.

Students will be required to participate in two (2) half days of supervised community-based clinical work. This can be completed as part of their project or as a separate experience if their specific project does not involve direct clinical community contact. The clinical requirement can be fulfilled at one of the following three (3) sites: 1) Union Gospel Mission's Center of Hope homeless shelter for women and their children; 2) North Dallas Shared Ministries or 3) Parkland Family Medicine Residency Clinic.

Students will complete and submit at the end of the rotation a brief written report describing their clinical community-based experiences, and how the experiences are relevant in the context of the population medicine perspective. The narrative report will be a minimum of two pages in length, must include a scientific abstract, and will be submitted to the course director at the completion of the rotation. Students will also be given the option of discussing and presenting their report to a meeting of interested faculty, residents, and students, to be arranged by the course director. Students will also be encouraged to disseminate their findings at local, national and international conferences.

Project Selection

Students will be encouraged to submit a project proposal on a CBPR or service learning project of interest. Students who do not already have a project selected will be able to collaborate with faculty, Family Medicine residents or other medical students on existing projects in the Division of Community Medicine. A listing of available projects will be located on the CM Elective website.

Method of Evaluation

A written evaluation report of the preceptorship experience is required of both the student and preceptor(s) before a grade is assigned. The reports consist of a quantitative component using evaluation scales, and a brief qualitative component asking for an assessment of the community medicine experience. The preceptor(s) evaluation will address the student's professional contribution to the project and understanding of community-oriented care. The student's report will address the project's experiential components, and the relevant connections between the project and the student's academic coursework. Students complete and submit a written report at the end of the rotation describing their community-based experiences, and how the experiences are relevant in the context of the population medicine perspective and the social determinants of health.

Students will be asked to complete a post-elective evaluation of their experience. This evaluation will include qualitative and quantitative components and will be used to further improve the course for future students. The student's grade or standing with the Division of Community Medicine will not be affected by their responses.

Policy on Absences and Involvement Hours

It is the policy of UT Southwestern Medical School that unexcused absences are not allowed. Requests for an excused absence are considered on an individual basis by the course director, with and are restricted to a maximum of three days. Absences beyond this number will result in a failing grade for the course unless compensated with an equivalent number of days at a later time. Students should expect to participate in activities related to this course a minimum of 30 hours per week.

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