



STUDENT OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Commitment to Osteopathic Pride and Excellence

Student Doctor Network Community and Preventive Medicine Scholarship

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Community and Preventive Medicine is the key to improving everyone's health. Physicians or future physicians, like me, who have a Masters in Public Health (MPH) degree, tend to think more globally in terms of prevention and helping the masses rather than just the individual. The physician side of me will, of course, always focus on each and every patient individually and holistically. However, through my MPH program I have learned that the best way to stop something from reappearing is to work with a team to evaluate the center cause, develop a cure and a prophylaxis, and then provide the option to everyone for an improved quality of life to the community as well as to the affected individual. As part of my culmination project for my MPH, I coauthored a chapter in a textbook regarding the effect of poverty on children's health. The conclusion the chapter came to was that comprehensive and early intervention strategies such as neighborhood-based initiatives to provide employment and improve community agencies, expand comprehensive health insurance coverage for all children and provisioning public housing can all significantly benefit poor children and their health outcomes. It was also determined that strategies that are most effective are not those that rely on individual behaviors or access, but instead those that focus on improving society's collective health and wellness.

During my practicum, I also did the analysis and evaluation of a community survey research project highlighting the disparities seen at a local hospital treating children from different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic status suffering from chronic disabilities. My work was presented as part of my preceptor's project to help improve the national survey collecting information on children with special health care needs. Again, this study showed how each patient's experience was affected not just by their individual illness, but also how all health care professionals', family members', and community members' attitudes and actions also made an impact on the quality of their health.

Prior to enrolling into medical school I worked as a Project Coordinator for two federally funded national grants, one highlighting the benefits of the medical home model for improved primary care of children with special health care needs (CSHCN) and the other focused on improving access to care for children and families of children with epilepsy in rural communities. Both projects presented me with opportunities to set up partnerships with community agencies in California, Arkansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, as well as others, to not only brainstorm methods for improving access to care for children and families living in the individual states, but also how to improve it nationally. Together we raised awareness of seizure disorders, encouraged newborn screenings, lobbied for better access to care, set up pilot clinics in rural communities, created forms for improved communication between physicians and patients from different ethnic backgrounds, and focused on the betterment of the system of care overall. During the year we arranged many conferences for local



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community agency leaders to attend. I was fortunate enough to not only arrange a 400 person conference on Emergency Preparedness for CSHCN, but to also lead a workshop on Care Notebooks during the conference. The true success of the projects was that not only did they approach their goal through the health care system, but they also setup sustainable community partnerships encouraging a more efficient and welcoming atmosphere for both patients and health care providers alike.

Now that I am in medical school, with the limited time we have outside of classes and studies, I have kept up my passion for improving community health and promoting preventive medicine. I have volunteered in many health fairs, provided consults at the local low-income health clinic, served food to the homeless, and setup community partnerships between local agencies and the faculty physicians at WesternU. While doing all this I managed to maintain my grades and be accepted into Sigma Sigma Phi, the National Honorary Osteopathic Service Fraternity. In this upcoming school year, as SOMA president, I will be working even harder to raise awareness of various opportunities to reach out and help the community through setting up more health fairs, conducting a book drive, bringing in informative speakers to educate fellow students about preventative medicine and community health, and many more events. I truly believe that the true worth of a physician is not measured just by test scores and grades, but by how well they can interact with patients and community members when put out in the real world. The health of a community is a reflection of the local physicians and I hope that when I become a Pediatrician that my community's health will be an enviable model for other communities. Since early intervention is a very important factor of preventive medicine I believe that Pediatrics is the perfect fit for me because I get to instill within the children the empowerment of being active in their own health thus allowing them to develop and mature understanding the greater impact of their actions on society as a whole.

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