

## **URMC School of Medicine and Dentistry – Community Health Improvement Course**

Community health at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) is an important aspect of medicine, so much so that it is included as a fourth pillar of the URMC mission: education, research, patient care, and community health. Improving the health of the community in which we live, work, and play is the responsibility of any community member, but even more so for physicians. Physicians are community leaders, especially when it comes to health. In addition, learning about the social, economic, environmental and behavioral aspects of patients will have a profound effect on the way medical students care for their future patients, and this concept is integral to the bio-psychosocial model of care that was originated here at URMC. The Community Health Improvement Course (C.H.I.C.) is a four-week experience, required for 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students at URMC, which includes didactic coursework, experiential learning, and a service learning project aimed at improving community health.

The learning objectives for the CHIC course center on the Population Health Competencies for Medical Students recommended by the AAMC Regional Medicine-Public Health Education Centers (RMPHE)<sup>1</sup>. Overall, at the completion of CHIC, students should be able to:

- Understand that health is more than health care, and be able to articulate that social determinants of health are significant predictors of health outcomes
- Describe population health and understand that in order to effectively impact the health of a population, providers must engage resources and interventions outside of traditional medicine
- Incorporate psycho-social approaches to patient care including effective use of non-medical providers and location of community resources to address psycho-social needs
- Demonstrate principles of effective community engagement, and understand how these principles are critical to improving the health of communities and reducing disparities
- List significant personal contributions to community health improvement accomplished during the CHIC 4-week block

CHIC students learn through on-line, self-guided lessons that include webinars, videos, recorded discussions, expert panels, and interactive modules followed by classroom-style lectures and group discussions 1-2 times a week that are designed to explore community health concepts at a deeper level. Classroom discussions are led by URMC faculty as well as community leaders and content experts from disciplines often outside of medicine. The course work is supplemented by experiential learning that includes exploration of the Rochester food system, transit system, poverty and social services through small group guided exercises. In addition, if other relevant lectures or classes occur during the students' month of CHIC, such as Public Health Grand Rounds, the students are expected to make every effort to attend such lectures as recommended by the CHIC Director.

Working on a community health improvement project moves classroom learning into a tangible application of concepts while building community engagement skills and cultural competence. CHIC students spend 20-25 hours a week working on community health improvement projects that move

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<sup>1</sup> Maeshiro, R et al. Medical Education for a Healthier Population: Reflections on the Flexner Report from a Public Health Perspective. *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 85, No. 2 / February 2010

beyond service learning. Projects must be population focused, evidence based, measureable and sustainable. True and effective community partnership requires maintained levels of mutually beneficial commitment over time. Damage can be done when a student ‘drops in’ to a partner agency to complete an unsustainable project not based on community participation, or that is not evidence-based, and leaves without follow up. To avoid this, CHIC projects are predetermined with long-standing community partners, and will often span several blocks of students. At the conclusion of the CHIC project, students should be able to:

- Understand the importance of robust community participation in community health improvement strategies to improve population health
- Demonstrate principles of effective community engagement, and understand how these principles are critical to improve the health of communities and reduce disparities
- Design a sustainable and evidence-based community health project. The student might design an individual project with their partner, or understand the evidence and sustainability involved in the on-going project that they are involved with
- Participate in an aspect of evaluation which can include evaluation planning, data collection, analysis, or dissemination and be able to articulate why that aspect is important in the overall evaluation of the program
- Understand the culture and demographics of a specific population through first-hand experience communicating with the target audience of the intervention

CHIC students are able to choose their community health improvement project from a list of existing community-based initiatives, based on personal interest. A few weeks prior to CHIC, a list of available projects will be sent to students who are registered for the class. Students who are Candidates for Distinction in Community Health will be permitted to use CHIC project time to continue their work on independent longitudinal projects. Projects for spring 2015 include:

- Children’s Institute – Healthy Weight Program in schools
- Emerging Infections Program – HAI and ID Surveillance
- Diabetes Prevention Program – lifestyle 22 week intervention
- Public Health Sciences – Maternal Child Health and Breastfeeding
- Foodlink – Mobile market service and customer interview
- Cancer Services Program – Outreach and education around screening
- ABVI Early Vision Screening – Preventive eye care at Headstart
- Kids Thrive 585 – community resource linkages with pediatric residents
- St. Joseph’s Neighborhood Center – QI at comprehensive HC center
- Teen Health and Success Partnership – Work/study for at-risk teens
- Sustainable Mindfulness Meditation for Adolescents – continuity of care
- Homelessness – student-run street outreach for health and social services
- Rochester Public Library - embedded social worker for homeless
- Refugee Health – health education and screening, translation services
- UR Well – Student-run health clinics – QI Initiatives

