**Trip Summary**

**Medical Outreach Maine (M.O.M.) | May 26-29, 2015**

*A program of the University of Maine Career Center in collaboration with, and supported by Eastern Maine AHEC, Maine AHEC Network, Penobscot Community Health Care, athenahealth, and Tufts University School of Medicine*

In 2006, Eastern Maine AHEC partnered with the University of Maine’s Office of Health Professions to develop a service-learning program that would expose students to rural health needs. Encouraging pre-health professions students to work in rural and underserved areas and providing mentors in these regions is paramount to encouraging students to eventually practice where they are needed most. The program consists of traveling to an area of Maine and immersing in the local culture for a week while providing outreach.

This year, the student participants had diverse backgrounds and interests. A total of ten rising UMaine undergraduates attended with six students being second-years, three third-years, and one fourth-year. The majority of these students are majoring in biology or chemistry with the intention of pursuing traditional allopathic MD programs. One student expressed a desire for acceptance into osteopathic programs, while another was thinking of dental school. Two students were very interested in physician assistant programs, and one student is enrolled in the Bachelors of Science in Nursing program. Combined with the five rising second-year Tufts MD students, four of which are in the Maine Track Program, a total of four students expressed interest in practicing as family medicine providers. Others noted current interest in becoming specialists and/or surgeons. Three participants are certified as Basic Emergency Medical Technicians and one is a Certified Nursing Assistant.

This year marked the eighth extend stay trip planned by staff in the UMaine Career Center, the office that supports pre-health students. Students spent four days in the Waldo County area covering towns including Belfast, Thorndike and Searsport as well as the greater community.

On day one, participants benefited from exposure to athenahealth’s corporate mission of strengthening the provider-patient relationship through the use of technology and their company’s unique services. Also while on site, students learned about emerging models of primary care delivery and engaged in a discussion on health care reform.

The student group convenes strictly for the purpose of these four days and time was allowed for team development in the evening coupled with a detailed training for outreach activities. The medical students provided in-depth education on blood pressure measurement techniques and behavior modifications to support cardiovascular health that was later demonstrated back at community blood pressure screenings.

Day two was anchored with a community health experience at the Waldo County YMCA. Participants set up and helped served at the organization’s monthly “Active Older Adults Luncheon.” While on site, students performed blood pressure screenings and dental health outreach to the pre-school program. Quickly developing a rapport and facilitating therapeutic conversation with older adults was a foreign concept to many undergraduate students. However, this opportunity provided a learning experience that many pre-health profession students may not get otherwise. One student wrote,

*“This was my first experience in any sort of actual medical environment-- even as minor as this was. I found that it exposed me to at least a glimpse of what healthcare truly is, an interaction between humans aimed towards keeping one another healthy. While I've always had the personal passion and ambition for pursuing a career in some field of the medical sciences, being a part of this assured me that I want to spend my life helping people and having these positive interactions.”*

While Tufts students ferried to Isleboro to learn about island health care, undergraduate students toured facilities at Waldo County General Hospital (WCGH). Students learned about the importance of the Critical Access Hospital designation for rural Maine hospitals and how the organization was focused on community health programing including their free dental clinic and home health services. Dr. Loxterkamp, a local family physician, joined the group for dinner at a local eatery. He reminded students that being a health care provider was about relationships and honesty. A student reflected on this interaction.

*“Dr. Loxterkamp was incredibly inspiring to hear speak. Personally, I had been considering a major in journalism and a minor in music when applying to college, but I thought that careers in healthcare were a competition of specialization and robots. I had been given the impression that you have to read nothing but science and medical books and do nothing but study if you want to be a doctor, and hearing Dr.Loxterkamp talk about the need for well-rounded doctors in order to inspire membership as a tool for health really hit home for me. Leaving dinner that night I felt reassured that my diverse interests aren't holding me back from pursuing a life in medicine, but are instead going to be invaluable to me along the way.”*

The majority of the group’s school outreach was on day three and four. This is when the group divided to reach as many community members as possible, young and old. The Belfast Farmer’s Market hosted a blood pressure screening site. Students also provided the attending community with a guide to farmer’s market vegetables and recipes developed by former students in the “Intro to Health Professions” course at UMaine. Some students were able to interact with 160 students individually at Searsport Elementary School assisting the school nurse with state mandated vision, hearing, and body metric screenings.

* Pre-School | Dental Health: 64 students, 4 schools, 22 hours
  + Distributed toothbrushes, toothpaste, and floss.
  + Educated with puppets and stories the importance of dental hygiene, brushing technique, and healthy snacks.

*“The preschools I visited taught me that I love working with children-- something I never knew about myself. Their enthusiasm and engagement really made for a positive learning experience for students of all ages.”*

* Elementary School | Tick Identification and Prevention: 306 students, 2 schools, 153 hours
  + Presented a curriculum prepared by the Maine Department of Education and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on tick identification, habitat, common diseases spread and symptom identification, prevention of bite, and removal techniques.

*“A tick had already bitten more than half of the students we worked with this year. The problem is exploding and awareness is key. The students were responsive to the curriculum and I feel as though they really learned from it. The school administration was incredibly appreciative of these efforts and certainly seemed to believe they were worthwhile.”*

* High School | Health Careers: 40 students, 3 schools, 40 hours.
  + Met with interested students and science classrooms to discuss options in health careers and personal experiences with higher education.

*“While the numbers of participants were lower than I expected, I do think it was very helpful for the students that did attend.”*

* Community Health | Blood Pressure Screenings: 37 screenings, 2 sites.
  + Measure blood pressures of consenting older adults.
  + Engage in conversation about access and utilization of primary care as well as personal health history.
  + Teach behavior modifications that may reduce baseline blood pressure.

*“I saw several interactions with people who likely needed to see a doctor. Conversations that happened during the screening were a good way to open the door to the possibilities of seeing a PCP.”*

Overall, the group volunteered over 230 contact hours while in the area. In addition to the experience of delivering health education and promotion activities, the trip provided a first hand look at the medical needs of a rural community. A student reflected on this point.

*“The trip was an incredible opportunity to explore medicine, especially in a rural setting. It was great to see how well the community is doing with community events and activities at the YMCA. Belfast is an underserved area, but they do a great job working with what they have and trying to make their community as healthy and interactive as possible. I've always wanted to practice in Maine, and this trip only reinforced my feelings. Belfast showed me that working in rural medicine doesn't necessarily mean living in a horribly boring or run down area. Belfast is a great little city, and I would live and work there in a heartbeat. It was great to experience other parts of Maine, especially somewhere as diverse as Belfast, socioeconomically. Having the opportunity to speak with the senior population at the YMCA and get Dr. Loxterkamp's perspective on the town was great. It showed how people in Belfast have different roles in the community. Everything we did during our visit was meaningful to the community and me. I truly believe that this trip was life changing for me.”*

The ad hoc group was a cohesive team by the end of the last day. While the framework and content of the trip was planned for them, there were consistent opportunities for leadership and opportunities for critical thinking through guided reflection.

*“I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I signed up for this trip but the experiences I had were levels above anything I was anticipating. The people were all great and the communities that we visited were all very receptive to our program and us. There were so many things to do and see and it was a privilege to be selected to attend. Working with the Tufts students was a great experience and it was nice to be able to talk with them. It made medical school seem less distant and I feel as if I have a better idea of what to expect with graduate level learning.”*

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Enclosures Survey Results

Praise from Outreach Sites

Data Tracking Grid