



Geisinger
Commonwealth
School of Medicine

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a series of interviews with medical students who attend Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine (GCSOM). The Family- and Community-Centered Experience (FCCE) program is an important part of GCSOM's patient-centered community-based curriculum. The goal of the FCCE program is for medical students to learn the human aspect and personal family experiences related to managing a chronic illness or disability, or encountering social determinants of health, such as limited income, access to healthy foods, language barriers, and racism. Families that volunteer share their medical and/or social history with GCSOM students to provide invaluable training that cannot be taught in a classroom setting: FCCE families are the students' educators and can help them better understand factors that influence health and lived experiences outside the clinical space.

How the Family Centered Experience Works

Each volunteer family is matched with 2-3 medical students at the end of their first semester, and the matched students will follow the volunteer family throughout the next calendar year. GCSOM's Family- and Community-Centered Experience Liaison contacts the volunteer family and shares information about the matched students; the Family- and Community-Centered Experience Liaison also provides the volunteer family's contact information to the students, who are responsible for contacting their assigned family to determine when and where to meet. [Meetings with students will be conducted by following state and federal guidelines and through agreed upon formats \(in-person, zoom, phone, etc.\).](#) Please allow up to 60 minutes for each meeting.

Students meet with the volunteer family five times during each calendar year (three times from January to early May and twice from August to early November). During each visit, students come prepared to ask questions about the volunteer family's challenges and triumphs, focusing on experiences of illness and its impact on their life and the lives of their family and/or social or structural challenges that have impacted their physical, mental, social, economic, intellectual, and/or spiritual health. You can help them to understand any challenges you've faced related to health and/or society (such as racism, language barriers, or economic struggles) and how they have impacted your physical, mental, social, emotional, intellectual, and/or spiritual health. You may find some of the questions to be personal; you may choose not to answer any of their questions at any time.

Your conversations with the students are confidential, and your privacy will be respected. Following the family visits, students meet with their peers and faculty members at GCSOM in small group sessions to discuss (in confidence) what they have learned from their families; they also submit written reflections that include other-orientated perspective taking (writing what they learned from you using a first-person perspective). Volunteer confidentiality is very important to GCSOM faculty, students, and staff. Students share their experiences in a confidential learning environment that respects the volunteer's privacy. If there is any information you do not want them to discuss with their classmates, tell them and they will respect your wishes.

We want you to keep in mind that our students are at the very beginning of their medical training. This is a required learning activity to understand and value community perspectives on health and society. All students are counseled about their role and are not to give you any medical advice. If you have questions about your health and/or healthcare, please direct your questions to your personal physician. If at any time you do not want to continue in the Family Centered Experience program, you may withdraw by contacting Sharon Myers at **570-687-9707** or skmyers1@geisinger.edu. Your participation is **entirely voluntary**. There is no penalty for you or the students should you withdraw. However, we certainly hope that you find this experience to be valuable and that you will be willing and able to participate in all the interviews.

Through the FCCE, medical students learn:

- The impact of illness on one’s sense of self, one’s relationship with family and friends, the environment, activities, and future goals and aspirations
- The impact of social factors (such as racism, access to education, built neighborhoods) on one’s sense of self, one’s relationship with family, friends, and society and future goals and aspirations
- The influence doctors and other perceived figures of authority have on the way individuals view themselves and their identities
- How beliefs and assumptions of health care providers and society effect an individual’s identity, including gender, age, race/ethnicity, national origin, language spoken, appearance, and other social statuses
- How to incorporate individuals’ previous experiences into a medical practice that can be characterized as family-centered and values dignity, respect, information sharing, participation, and collaboration
- How to be attentive and respectful listeners and to honor an individual’s story
- Respect for the volunteer family’s values and rights to privacy

Why We Need You

The experience of meeting individuals in the community provides students with the opportunity to better understand the community in which they serve and future patients for which they will provide care. Students learn about disease processes and social determinants of health through textbooks and lectures, but this only provides a surface understanding of the factors that influence health and little on the lived experience. Understanding how an individual deals with real life circumstances like chronic illness or access to healthy foods can change the way a student learns from and cares for a future patient. Most importantly, by listening attentively and carefully to these stories, students foster a sense of empathy and humility and can learn to become socially accountable to the communities they serve.

Families that volunteer for the FCCE program find the experience to be extremely rewarding. They have a direct influence on educating tomorrow’s doctors by sharing their experiences, an invaluable teaching tool. They also have the opportunity to have their story heard and witnessed.

Please complete the following form and return to Sharon Myers:

Skmyers1@geisinger.edu

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

525 Pine Street

Scranton, PA 18509



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Family- and Community-Centered Experience Participation

By signing below, I agree to participate as a volunteer for GCSOM's Family- and Community-Centered Experience (FCCE) program and have read and agree to the FCCE Statement of Understanding. I understand that my participation is **entirely voluntary** and that there is no penalty should I decide to withdraw from the program.

Signature

Date

Title

Last Name

First Name

Home Address

City

State

Zip Code

Home Phone Number

Cell Phone Number

Email Address

****Please circle/star your preferred contact method**

Please provide details for any family members who will participate with you.

Name

Relationship

Signature (parent/guardian for minors)

Name

Relationship

Signature (parent/guardian for minors)

Name

Relationship

Signature (parent/guardian for minors)

What story would like to share about chronic illness, disability, access to social services or health care, language barriers, economic barriers, racism, etc.?
