



TCMC Agency Brief

Information for Regional Agencies About the Community Immersion Experience

Summer 2015

Community Immersion Experience

As part of TCMC's Community Weeks curriculum, known as Community Immersion, pre-clinical students visit a variety of human services agency throughout the 17 county region served by The Commonwealth Medical College. Organizations such as The AIDS Resource Alliance in Williamsport, Telespond in Scranton, an adult day services program for the elderly, and Cori's Place, serving adults with intellectual disabilities, became medical school classroom as first and second year TCMC students learned about the personal struggles of people coping with a chronic illness, aging or disability.



Rachel Polinski, M1, served at [Cori's Place](#) in Hanover Township, an Adult Training Facility for adults with disabilities that offers a structured curriculum of experiential learning, emotional growth, and leadership opportunities.

The [AIDS Resource Alliance](#) in Williamsport, photo left, provides free HIV/AIDS prevention, education and testing and provides assistance to those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.



"At [Telespond](#), photo left, my experience showed me the wealth of care options and resources available to families seeking part-time care of elderly family members," says Kier Blevens, MD1. "It taught me the importance of serving our growing senior population and to understand the level of commitment that is required to care for loved ones."



According to Jennifer Joyce, MD, one of TCMC's professor of Family Medicine, "TCMC's Community Immersion program connects our students with

regional communities through partnerships with local service agencies. These partnerships introduce 'Community as Teacher' in our community based approach to health. Our goal for the program is for students to learn the power of collaboration in eliminating health disparities. Through the program, students reflect on the dominant and complex relationships between health and biology, genetics, environment and individual health behaviors. TCMC students see firsthand how socioeconomic status, the physical environment, discrimination, racism and literacy levels impact the health of individuals and communities. This is done through the lens of service as students participate in visits to dedicated local community agencies and structured interviews. Group discussions and guided reflective exercises complete the cycle. It is a great partnership for all."

Community Immersion Goals & Objectives

The Community Immersion Experience expands an understanding of health care needs by providing opportunities for students in teams to visit with various agencies that provide for family and community health.

Goal:

Develop Clinician-Community Relationships

Learning Objectives:

- Discover diverse constructs/models of community
- Interpret community perceptions of health care (including myths and misconceptions)
- Relate to local community dynamics:
 - Demographic
 - Economic
 - Political
 - History of land use
 - Migration
 - Occupation
- Discover local environments and their impact on health
- Interpret the isolation of the health care community from the community at large
- Demonstrate respect for community integrity, cultural diversity, and multiple determinants of health
- Understand health-relevant policy
- Operate from an open-minded position
- Distinguish honest limits of medical care
- Illustrate the responsibility to contribute health expertise to public dialogue
- Demonstrate respect of community leadership
- Relate to the responsibility to work for health of the public:
 - Connect Community Health Research Project (CHRP) work with other community visits

TCMC is committed to non-discrimination in all employment and educational opportunities.

TCMC's Agency Partners

WEST REGION

AIDS Resource Alliance
Agency on Aging (STEP)
Albright Life
American Rescue Workers
BLAST CIU
Central PA Food Bank
Children's Development Center
Family Promise of Lycoming County
Hope Enterprises
The Learning Center (Adult Literacy)
Roads to Freedom: Center for Independent Living
Saving Grace Homeless Shelter
Shepherd of the Streets
YMCA

Thank You!

West Student Perspective

"During my visit to **Hope Enterprises**, I was excited to be a part of the energy and positivity. They've certainly fulfilled their mission of enhancing the lives of individuals."

-Lauren McGee, MD3

"My experience at **Shepherd of the Streets** was extremely enlightening. I really appreciated that so many people were willing to share their stories about struggles in medicine with visiting students. As a future provider, I also found it helpful to hear about some of the specific access issues that affect so many and hope that this awareness will help guide me in the future to best care for my own patients!"

-Victoria Quimpo, MD3

"Spending a day at the **Central Pennsylvania Food Bank** was a really unique experience. We got to go out and deliver food boxes to elderly citizens of Williamsport and it was amazing to see how much they appreciated the food. It was also a great experience just to learn about the community of Williamsport overall!"

-Sarah Lowry, MD3

West Family Perspective

The Family Centered Experience (FCE) program is an important part of TCMC's patient-centered, community-based curriculum. Each year during the Community Week Experience, first year students are paired with a patient. They visit their patient three times a year for two years to learn the human aspect and personal family experiences that arise from managing a chronic or serious illness. This year, Beth Kelchner of Watsontown shared her challenges in caring for her 85 year old mother, Alma Bieber.

Learning About Eldercare

West campus students Kyle Foley and Kyle Gleaves, M1, understand more about the challenges of caring for an elderly loved one. Through meetings with Beth Kelchner and her 85 year old mother, Alma Bieber, they heard first hand about multiple hospital stays, insurance regulations and the demands of 24/7 care.

I hope I am helping them see the patient and talk to them, not just look at the chart," says Beth. "Sometimes a health care professional will talk to me because of my mother's age, says Beth, but my mother will tell them, I'm right here!"

Alma has arthritis and has been through several rehabilitation stays to regain strength and mobility. Her health problems, she says, leave her frustrated and feeling useless after tending to the animals on her Watsontown farm for 40 years.

"I have learned much from talking with Alma and Beth and being in their home, says Kyle Foley, MD1. I was continually impressed that their whole family was able to rally around Alma and take responsibility in her care. From listening to our assigned family's experiences, I can now better understand that the decisions made in the doctor's office have far-reaching and personal consequences, a lesson that I will strive to remember in the future."



Alma Bieber and her daughter, Beth Kelchner, front, visited with Kyle Foley, M1, left, and Kyle Gleaves, M1, right.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying to become an FCE participant, please contact TCMC's Regional Campus Office at 570.504.9067 or email rcr@tcmc.edu.