
Sites across the Continental U.S. . . .

Student comments

Community-based Site – Sparta NC

Dr. Jack Cahn, PSU/COM alumni, has a practice site (located across from the local hospital) in the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina, approximately one half hour south of the VA border and about an hour's drive NW of Winston Salem. The area economy is based in agriculture such as row crops, dairy, sheep and cattle, tobacco, and Christmas tree farms. Unemployment is high. The patient population is primarily adult and geriatric. This rotation provided a culturally rich education with a wide range of medical and social experiences. The preceptor was excellent, easy to work with and knowledgeable, going out of his way to include the student in his activities. Dr. Cahn is a member of the Mental Health Services Board in Allegheny County, and works on the Mental Health Services Task Force for NW North Carolina, which allowed the student to experience first hand, at meetings, how a community builds on local ideas in order to meet a state requirement for quality healthcare.

The student worked with excellent physicians and staff, and stayed in a beautiful house located close to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Many families have been established in this area for more than one-hundred years, with surnames reflecting the strong Scots-Irish influence of the New River Valley.

Community-based Site - Orono ME

In the Norumbega Clinic, both the patients and providers made the student feel welcome. Student had excellent support from the AHEC network in finding local housing, and had plenty of opportunity on weekends to explore the area. Bangor is approximately an hour from the coast, offering such treasures as Acadia National Park. This site is highly recommended to anyone looking for a supportive educational environment in a small rural town. The people are excellent to work with, plus there are several educational opportunities available that emphasize the breadth and depth of career paths for family physicians. The student performed office procedures, such as splinter removal, cryotherapy for warts, and mole or sebaceous cyst removal. The student additionally attended mental health facility meetings and a faculty meeting at University of Maine regarding obstetric care. Obstetric care is provided in the clinic, so the student was able to learn the basics of colposcopy and met with some of the women coming in for the procedure. A large percent of the patient population was adult, but occasionally saw a child for a well-child check up.

Delmarva Rural Ministries, Farmworker Health Services - Kent County DE

Work with migrant farmers, many of who travel throughout the United States to harvest various crops in different seasons, often for less than the legal minimum wage. Many of the workers have families, including young children, who travel with them, while others leave their families at home. This nomadic lifestyle presents numerous challenges in trying to maintain health and well being in this relatively young population. This patient population is more susceptible to respiratory damage, cancer, and dermatological problems from pesticide exposure, as well as the occupational hazards that accompany farming and agriculture work. Many of the farm workers suffer from mental health disease, such as schizophrenia, and even more with major depression. Student was able to attend a monthly meeting with the Department of Labor to discuss issues that arise with the migrant farm workers.

Community-based Site - Natalie Grider MD

Kutztown Family Medicine - Kutztown PA

In a family medicine practice, patients come to trust the physician and his/her judgment about their health and health maintenance. The student learned that your patients are your allies, as you try to empower them, letting them make decisions; give them options and let them decide the approach. This was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the patients, their families and what is happening in their lives. You become an integral part of their lives, and as a physician, treating them becomes an easier thing to do and visits to the office can be tailored accordingly. Student was given the opportunity to see patients on her own, assess their needs and act accordingly. This kind of autonomy is precious and the amount of trust given was amazing and greatly appreciated. This month taught the student a world of knowledge. She was able to practice medicine, make good decisions, and treat patients. Always loving the idea of treating patients, seeing them grow and develop, and taking care of them when they are sick and when they are healthy, becoming a part of their lives and making a difference, became a reality.

Zuni Health Center – Zuni NM (See *Indian Health Service, PCMED 745*)

Zuni is in the flat high desert plains. Preceptor was a pediatrician, but functioned primarily as a family doctor. Student saw her preceptor run a code on an elderly man suffering a myocardial infarction with relative ease. The pediatrician impressed the student with his ability to manage chronic illnesses among older patients in continuity clinic and even more so with his willingness to deliver infants in the obstetrics ward. The physicians and staff were extremely friendly, happy, very relaxed, and helpful.

The atmosphere was so positive it was almost surreal. In the birthing room, not only are the mother, father, doctors and nurses in attendance, but perhaps 10 other family members. Extended families seemed much more cohesive among the Zuni. These ties were strengthened not only by shared cultural values and traditions, but also linguistically, politically, and geographically. The Teen Health Center in Zuni is actually run by the tribe. Teens who had appointments were picked up from school and brought directly to the Center, which prevented “no shows.” Most Zuni individuals were born and raised within the same community and stayed with the Zuni families. Domestic violence was a problem on the reservation, and the biggest obstacles to health among Native Americans are poverty, alcoholism, and obesity. Zuni children are taught to speak Zuni before English, and many children had to translate for their grandmothers in clinic who still spoke only Zuni. Student was there for the Zuni religious ceremonies called *Shalako*. It is a celebration of the winter solstice - the coming of a new year. The staff at the hospital was invited to participate to a limited extent. When visiting a Zuni home during the *Shalako*, each of the health care visitors brought gifts of various food items. They were invited to eat traditional Zuni meals. They also were invited to corn-grinding ceremonies, listening to traditional singing and drumming. The physicians were very respectful of the Zuni community and they were very careful to participate in the ceremonial events as allowed. Student also had contact with Navajo people, making home visits. Student stated that this was the most positive experience of her medical training - an opportunity to truly discover community medicine.

Federally Funded Community Health Center – Dungannon, VA

Population: 250. The nearest hospital is 35 miles away (equivalent of one and one-half hours because of windy roads). The Clinch River Health Services Center. Dungannon had been the home to multiple coal mining companies along with adjacent counties in Kentucky and Tennessee, but this had long since died out and now the people living in this region live off the tobacco, corn, and other farming products they could raise or from jobs that were often 50-80 miles per day commute. The student was able to spend time with three clinicians who provided truly comprehensive care to their patients, were active in their communities and the lives of their families, and enjoyed all the benefits that a rural environment has to offer. The student saw some ingenious methods of providing health care services to patients who would otherwise not be able to afford them, and also the many benefits offered by a community health center. The student learned about the historical, cultural, and religious perspectives of those living in Appalachia and got to participate in many unique events and activities.