



Complex Patients: Addressing the needs of patients in the Camden, NJ community

Student Interns: Alanna Goldberg, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Doctor of Medicine; Kiana Malta, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Doctor of Medicine
Academic Preceptors: Marlena Klein, D.O., Cooper Medical School of Rowan University; Danielle Nordone, D.O., Cooper Medical School of Rowan University
Community Preceptors: Kelly Craig, MSW, LSW, Camden Coalition; Dayna Fondell MSN, RN, Camden Coalition

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Community Partner: Camden Coalition (CC) is a nonprofit organization with a multidisciplinary team that aims to improve care for people with complex care and social needs in Camden, NJ and across the country. Camden Coalition's mission is to transform the healthcare system to ensure each individual receives adequate, person-centered care. Camden Coalition has developed models to accomplish this task by utilizing partnerships with local organizations and harnessing meaningful relationships with the community. The organization is also proud to model their work and has a pedagogical approach to sharing their advocacy work on both regional and national levels.

PROJECT

Project A: Camden Coalition has recently completed a "7 day pledge" which aimed to link folks who had been to the ED to primary care providers (PCP) within 7 days for follow-up. Similarly, New Jersey recently introduced an incentive to hospitals to provide follow-up for patients who had been to the ED for behavioral health related illnesses. CC is working to develop a workflow with community partners to help consumers receive follow-up with an adequate provider within 30 days of their hospital visit. The second portion of this project aims to reduce stigma and understand the needs of the community and providers by developing a messaging campaign around mental health.

Project B: This project aimed to close a gap in COVID-19 immunization uptake. Based on data during the rollout of the vaccines, patients indicated they wanted to discuss it with their healthcare provider. However, it was this very demographic that expressed the most discomfort talking to hesitant patients. The CC developed a Vaccine Confidence Training program based on motivational interviewing to train those in patient facing roles to become more knowledgeable of the science of the vaccines and how to engage a hesitant patient. A secondary initiative was to create a Youth Ambassador Program to improve low vaccination rates in Camden youths and increase engagement.

PROJECT RESULTS

Both of the projects the student interns worked on this summer are ongoing initiatives aimed at decreasing health disparities in Camden. As they learned during their time at CC, much of the work with complex patients require multifaceted solutions. Therefore, the results must be judged qualitatively to fully appreciate the task in hand.

Project A: Working on this project the student intern observed a vast lack of resources available to those communities that are uninsured or underinsured for mental health services in Camden. While there is a dire need of services, staff and appointments are lacking. For the messaging portion, the intern was able to develop focused questions for the messaging campaign for community members and providers in Camden, NJ. As the project progresses the questions may change based on the responses the CC receives and as they continue to evaluate the direction and goals of this campaign.

Project B: The recruitment and interest in the Vaccine Confidence Training program has increased since the vaccine has become more readily available. The training dates are at complete capacity and there is significant demand for future trainings. The feedback from this program includes providers feeling empowered to have conversations about immunizations and equipped to navigate hesitancy via motivational interviewing. The project has also progressed to hire 15 Youth Ambassadors who will receive the Vaccine Confidence Training to promote immunization with the rise of COVID-19 cases in the community.

REFLECTION

"The opportunity to work as a BTG CHIP intern at the Camden Coalition ensured my view of healthcare is forever changed. The Coalition is actively shaping and improving the community via outreach, care coordination, and advocacy. The experience highlighted the need to improve the well being of complex patients and how to engage patients through methods of trauma informed care and motivational interviewing. Moving forward, I feel more prepared to provide care to patients and continue to educate myself on patient engagement."

"Working in an environment that looks at the systemic problems within our healthcare system and the ways these problems especially impact those most marginalized in society was a wonderful experience. As we learn about medicine through a physician's perspective we are able to view the patient as an entire entity and as the medical problem they are presenting with. This can, at times, isolate our view of the entire person and distill them into a single or a few illnesses. During the summer we learned yet another perspective - one from the organizational and structural perspective. This included from the view of government and policy, large hospital systems, insurance companies, and community perspectives. Having this experience is vital for our future roles as physicians where we will have to navigate the spaces, and now we will be able to do so with more insight."