
The Health Care Workforce Crisis:
The Future of Primary Care
in Rural and Urban America

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Innovative Community-Based Practices

Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC):

A workable model for physician assistant education to inspire graduates to work in underserved communities

Physician Assistant Education

- Students are trained in the medical model
- General medical curriculum – no specialization in entry level programs
- Curriculum 26-30 months
- Original conception was to provide primary care in rural communities
- As profession has grown, percentage of primary care providers has decreased

Physician Assistant Education

Vision of the program is the critical factor in the presence of community medicine in the curriculum.

Community Oriented Primary Care

- **Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC)**
- is an integrated practice which brings
- **personal health care**
- and **community medicine**
- together in a primary care setting.

Community Oriented Primary Care

- COPC programs address selected health problems of the whole community or **defined subgroups**, and may involve:
 - health promotion
 - primary or secondary prevention
 - curative, alleviative or rehabilitative care
 - or a combination of these activities.

The COPC Project Emerged

- **Racial disparity of birth outcomes in Westchester County** was chosen for the COPC project
- The project was designed to grow each year, resuming the inquiry each year to resume the work of the previous class.

THE PROJECT GROWS

Early years

- Background statistical information
- Identification of risk factors
- Stratification of data by ethnicity
- Comparison with state and national data.

THE PROJECT GROWS

Middle years

- Qualitative interviews with mothers of low birth weight infants.
- Design and administration of surveys of health behaviors that contribute to poor birth outcomes

Community Partnerships Form

- Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network NYS funded CBO
- Joint work on LHVPN project:
 - health behavior surveys
 - assessing link of diabetes and obesity with poor birth outcomes
 - participation in health education project of pre-conception healthy behaviors

Visiting Nurse Service- Far Rockaway, Queens

- Administrates day care center in addition to providing home assessment of families with children with special needs
- VNS-required data for a grant to expand services for special needs children
- Students divided into groups- each provided a community survey of a zip code with a focus on special needs

COPC as an innovation

- The community is used as a classroom
- Expansion and reinforcement of the tenets of medical diagnosis for use in community medicine
- Practical application of service to the underserved – demonstration of health care disparity.
- Imprinting community service through the curriculum

Challenges

- Student evaluation tends to gravitate to either extreme of the spectrum
- Community partnerships may need to be reestablished each year.
- Outcomes less sustainable than original plan-on-going intervention not yet established.
- Replication of model has not generated interest within the PA community.

Moving Forward

- Form partnerships with existing community projects
- Find like-minded educators
- Engage students in the evaluation process
- Publish and present

Meeting the Workforce Shortage

- Training as point of reference
- Role Modeling
- Keep in touch with students after they graduate

