



Perspective / Opinion

The Physician in the Community Pathway at MCW-Central Wisconsin

By Amy Prunuske, PhD; Corina Norrbom, MD; Kelly Mulder, MEd and Lisa Dodson, MD

The team in charge of the “Physician in the Community-Central Wisconsin Pathway” describes some of the activities and accomplishments they have seen ...

With rare exception, all of your most important achievements on this planet will come from working with others— or, in a word, partnership.

- Paul Farmer, MD

Dr. Lisa Dodson set forward a bold vision for MCW-CW to be one of the most community-engaged medical school campuses in the country, and a key mechanism of achieving this has been through the Physician in the Community Pathway. Dr. Corrie Norrbom, a family physician and local community leader, and Dr. Amy Prunuske, a researcher and educator, have served as the Physician in the Community course directors. They worked closely with Kelly Mulder to develop the course, which strives to raise student awareness and engagement in local Central Wisconsin issues.

Through the course’s core sessions, the students interact with local community members and become more comfortable recognizing and addressing social determinants of health in the clinic and in their communities. A recent session focused on the relocation of Afghan immigrants to Wausau. In addition, students must complete a two-year community-engaged research project, where they bring a physician perspective to partner with a community member on a local health priority.

A recent project evaluated the impact of the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin funded Advocates in Medicine Pathway - a pipeline program between UW-Stevens Point at Wausau, MCW-CW, and Northcentral AHEC. This pipeline pathway is designed to increase the number of rural and Hmong students pursuing medical degrees at MCW-CW.

Students can apply for funding to support their Pathways projects, made possible by the generous support of individuals and area foundations. The applications are reviewed by our Physician in the Community Advisory Board, which offers feedback to the students to improve their project ideas. The Physician in the Community team also received a Kern Institute Transformational Ideas Initiative (TI2) grant to develop an assessment tool that tracks students' skill development over the Pathway. Skills assessed by this TI2 grant including networking, collaboration, advocacy, and valuable character traits like persistence and social intelligence (Chandratre *et al.* 2021).

Through our team effort, the program has many successes to celebrate including both local and MCW recognition. One hundred student projects have been completed and continue to positively impact the region. Each year, the students create a short video and poster to share their work, including why they chose that area of focus, the goals of their project and lessons learned. The course sets the students on their way to be prepared to tackle the wicked problems common in health care and prepares them to be collaborative physician community leaders.

Learn more about the students' projects and community partnerships [here](#).

Learn more about the [Advocates in Medicine Pathway](#)

For further reading:

Community Engagement Assessment tool:

Chandratre, S, Norrbom, C, Zeman, C, and Prunuske, AJ. Strategies to Integrate Medical Student Education. *Journal of Regional Medical Campuses* 4(2) 2021.

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Kelly Mulder, Med, is the Campus Administrator and former education program coordinator for the Physician in the Community Pathway at MCW-Central WI.

Lisa Dodson, MD, is the Sentry Dean of MCW-Central Wisconsin.