

Perspective/Opinion



How the Urban and Community Health Pathway Has Informed My Residency

By Haley Bodette, MD

When I was starting my medical education at MCW, I knew it was likely that I would end up in a primary care specialty. Public health intrigued me, and preventative healthcare was an approach that just made sense in my mind. When it came time to pick a pathway, Urban and Community Health (UCH) seemed like an obvious choice. How could I help my patients on an individual level without having a baseline understanding of the community that they come from?

As we explored social determinants of health and learned about local organizations, I began to understand the way these resources could be incorporated into a clinic visit or upon discharge from a hospital admission. It was impactful to work directly with the members of these community organizations during our sessions and to hear their personal experiences helping patients beyond their medical needs. I was also fortunate to be able to work directly with members of the community through my work with the Milwaukee Women's Center for my pathway project.

One of the reasons I chose Family Medicine was the ability to develop relationships with patients and their families. I wanted to understand each person's social history in addition to their medical and psychological healthcare needs. As a resident, I am constantly drawing from the lessons I learned during my time in the UCH pathway. As I make clinical decisions, I make sure to balance what is most appropriate medically with what is most suitable for each patient's social situation. If extra social support is required, I feel comfortable directing my patients toward appropriate community resources and counseling them on how to fully utilize those resources.

Another crucial skill I learned while in UCH was working with an interpreter, particularly because a significant portion of my clinic population speaks Spanish. During this UCH session, we worked with professional interpreters and went through the fundamentals of working with an interpreter, such as using short sentences and speaking directly to the patient. Being able to function effectively with an interpreter in the room has made visits much more comfortable for my patients.

I am thankful to have been in the UCH pathway as it helped me to develop both empathy and problem-solving skills that will continue to benefit my patients throughout the rest of my career.

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