

Health Profession Students' Perspective of the Health Mentors Program

Health Mentors Program: Student Reflections

by Kathleen Tzan, 2nd year Medical Student

As another semester comes to an end and we turn our hopeful gazes forward to summer plans and beyond, now is the perfect time for us students to take a reflective moment on the many experiences and accomplishments that have defined our past academic year. Whether it be gaining confidence and clinical experience on the wards, or detailing out ever more clearly the intricacies of the human body, every facet of our educations at Thomas Jefferson University (TJU) continues to propel us forward towards the ultimate goal of becoming compassionate and skilled professionals.

One great component of a TJU education has been the Health Mentors Program (HMP). While TJU's many spheres of professional education—from PT to OT, nursing to medicine—are for the most part woefully isolated in their own curriculums, the HMP has been one unique way in which students across all healthcare fields are able to exchange ideas and share different perspectives on healthcare. For many of us, the HMP has been our only exposure to interprofessionalism and our golden opportunity to discuss individual roles in the broader picture of a patient management team, which makes the HMP experience that much more valuable.

As elucidated by second-year medical student Brittany Heckel, "Often, it feels as though each profession works on its own; this lack of coordination has always been frustrating to me. It wastes time, and it also reduces the quality of patient care." Reflecting on her health mentor team, Heckel added that she "was always impressed with the knowledge of each member of the group, and was happy to see how well our different knowledge bases complemented each other." OT student Leah Mohler commented similarly "Healthcare is moving in the direction of interdisciplinary teams that include healthcare professionals working in coordination towards improved patient care. The team approach of the Health Mentors Program provides insight to this model and insight to other professions. Understanding each others' roles and learning how to collaborate and respect the value of each discipline will go a far way in our future careers and in the future of healthcare."

The reality is that healthcare teams that mutually respect one another, effectively communicate, and collaborate together in coordinating patient care do result in better patient outcomes. As healthcare shifts its focus from an individualistic mentality to a team-based approach, we are lucky to be part of an institution that recognizes and values interprofessional education. Thus, it is with deep gratitude that we look back on our experiences this past year in the HMP and anticipate the incorporation of all we have learned here into our careers in the future.

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