



**Jefferson**  
HEALTH IS ALL WE DO

# Health Mentors Newsletter

Dear Health Mentors,

As a volunteer for Thomas Jefferson University's Health Mentors Program, you have played a key role in student development this past year. Because of your time and willingness to share your story and knowledge, this program has facilitated student learning of interdisciplinary teamwork and patient-centered care.

This fall, first year students entered the program and met you for the first time. They documented your past medical history and had the opportunity to hear of your life living with a chronic condition. Students then met with their interdisciplinary groups in order to collaborate and learn from the diverse perspectives of each student's respective field.

Second year students met or spoke with you about your home. Home safety and home visits were discussed within teams and small group sessions in order to teach students the value of each disciplines' perspective. Because of your willingness to share your story and open your homes to us, we were able to further see the value of home visits and the value of collaboration with the whole healthcare team. Thank you for being an invaluable asset to our education and for sharing your time and stories.

We look forward to meeting with you again in 2015, and we send you our best wishes for health and wellness this holiday season!

Sincerely,

Leah Mohler, Occupational Therapy Student, 2016

And the Health Mentor Newsletter Team: Amanda Chronister, Nursing; Chelsea Gorman, Nursing; David Halpern, Medicine; Pavitra Krishnamani, Medicine; Rebecca Livesay, Nursing; Jennifer Polo, Nursing; Kristina Toussaint, OT; Kathleen Tzan, Medicine



# Changes in Healthcare Changing Patient's Role

by Leah Mohler

Medical practices across the country are currently testing the Independence at Home Demonstration (IAH), under the Affordable Care Act. Patients participating in this demonstration are seen at home by a healthcare team. If approved, IAH could grow to include 1.5 million patients.

Second-year interdisciplinary teams in Jefferson's Health Mentors Program recently completed community visits to their mentors' homes. This experience provided students with insight into the value of home healthcare.

Occupational therapy (OT) student Amanda Siefert's team included two medical students, a nursing student, and a couple and family therapy student. She stated that home visits are particularly relevant for OT. While in the home, the health care provider is able to observe the patient's environment and make practical recommendations for activities and accommodations. Her mentor has lived with a C5-C6 spinal cord injury for over 20 years. Siefert noted that being in the home empowered her mentor to showcase her strengths and educate the team about her compensatory strategies. She found it "a much more positive experience." Additionally, her team

*"It changes the interaction. I felt as though I got to finally know who this man is..."*

was able to notice challenges caused by their mentor's environment that had not previously been mentioned. "The med student on our team noticed scuff marks on the walls where she may have had difficulty maneuvering her wheelchair through certain areas."

Medical student John Taras also recently

visited his mentor's home. "It changes the interaction. I felt as though I got to finally know who this man is that we have been meeting with for the past year." Taras was impressed by his mentor's immaculate home and the smart accommodations he created to meet his and his wife's needs. Taras also commented how his mentor posed questions to challenge him to find any further accommodations. He wanted to know what the students could do for him.

The experiences of these HMP participants suggests a bright future for the 1.5 million new IAH patients. Their healthcare may shift from the hospital to the home and from the dependent to the empowered.

## Upcoming Spring Modules

### Year One Module 2:

#### Preparing a Self-Management Support Plan for Wellness and Healthy Behavior

For this module, students will come prepared to ask you questions about wellness, in areas ranging from physical health to intellectual wellness to spirituality. With your input, your team will develop a personalized Support Plan for Wellness and Healthy Behavior.

### Year Two Health Mentors

Module 4 has been revised and students will no longer be meeting with their Health Mentor in the spring. Thank you for your participation in and dedication to the program! Faculty will be in touch in late spring/early summer to confirm if you are available to sign up to meet with a new team.

# Health Mentors Program: Student Reflections

by Kristina Toussaint

While the weather gets colder, another successful semester of the Health Mentors program is coming to a close. Throughout the fall the first year students just beginning their journeys at Jefferson had the opportunity to meet and learn from their new Health Mentors, while the second year students had the opportunity to reconnect with their prior Mentors, further developing the relationships that were started a year ago.

Coming into Jefferson, some students have had little to no experience working with an individual like this, which can be a little nerve-racking for some.

One first year student described her experience:

“Going into this experience I was excited but anxious at the same time. As an occupational therapy student, not many people fully understand what we do, so I knew it was all on me to convey my role both to my Interprofessional team and my mentor. This ended up being really rewarding, though, and I feel like I’m starting to figure out my niche. “

Students in the second year of the program, on the other hand, have had more time to grow into their roles and work dynamically with their team. This fall, these students made home visits to their mentors’ homes to conduct safety assessments. One student explained this experience. “I really didn’t feel like I had a good eye for some of the dangers, so I was really thankful to have my team there to work with. It showed me the importance of collaborative thinking and problem solving, and I think we actually provided our mentor with some really great insight.”

Though students are at different stages of learning and some are just beginning to form relationships with their mentors and team while others have completed their time with theirs, it is easy to see the growth that occurs through these experiences, setting students up for better Interprofessional outcomes in the future, and thereby providing patients with better care.



*Jefferson students and their Health Mentor*

## Know a Potential Health Mentor? Spread the Word!

If you know anyone who enjoys sharing their personal health experiences, please ask him/her to connect with us! We have a variety of Health Mentors from all different backgrounds who are at least 18 years of age and are living with chronic conditions or impairments (high blood pressure, asthma, arthritis, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, blindness, etc.).

If you know someone who is interested in learning more about the Health Mentors Program, please have him/her contact Sarah Dallas by phone at 215-955-8601 or by email at: Sarah.Dallas@jefferson.edu

They can also visit our website to complete an online application:

[http://www.jefferson.edu/university/interprofessional\\_education/programs/health\\_mentors\\_program.html](http://www.jefferson.edu/university/interprofessional_education/programs/health_mentors_program.html)

## What Our Health Mentors Have to Say About the Program:

Compiled by David Halpern

*"I found compassion, which encouraged me to continue fighting for my health"*

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*"Perfect experience for me as a patient with advanced cancer. Students were considerate and open to my sharing how I felt about end of life decisions, including how health care professionals can enhance the quality of life of someone like myself. Enjoyed the experience."*

*"It was an excellent experience for me and let me be more open with my doctor now... this program allowed me to be a little bit more open [to my actual physician about my health once I was comfortable enough to talk about it]."*

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*"I think it's a great program. I believe the students that I worked with have a better understanding of chronic illness in that it affects everyone differently."*

## What Our Health Mentors Have to Say To and About the Students:

*"I think the program is an excellent program especially for you guys in the medical fields getting ready for something new in that you will be dealing with people."*

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*"It's an excellent program, I learned so much from you all. You are not even in the field yet, and it gives me hope knowing who could be my next doctor, physician, or pharmacist I might talk to"*

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*"Learn all you can learn because when you get out there it is so different. A book is a book, but it is nothing like dealing with a person. Nobody can describe that feeling for you or even put that in words"*

*"When we are with you guys it's like a an extended family working together. It is not always about practical gain but about giving something back, and all we have is to give something back."*

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### Ideas Our Health Mentors Have for the Program:

*"I really enjoyed being part of such an amazing program. I wish there was a way for myself and other mentors to get out there and speak to others who might be interested in being part of such a great activity."*