



Jefferson
HEALTH IS ALL WE DO

Dear Health Mentors,

As this school year draws to a close, we want to thank you once again for donating your time, energy and experiences to this program. Because of you, we are able to improve our ability to provide excellent care to our future patients and clients. The Health Mentors Program has also taught us to appreciate the importance of working collaboratively with students and professionals from all health care fields. The time that you so generously have chosen to spend with us is truly helping to shape the future of healthcare.

This spring, first-year students met with you for the second time. They spent time getting to know their mentors on a deeper level and discussing specific challenges that arise as a result of living with at least one chronic illness. Student teams worked with their mentors to develop plans to promote holistic wellness and healthy living.



Although second-year students did not meet with their mentors for their final module, they continued to learn about patient-centered care and interprofessional team work. Students were allowed to pick one of ten learning activities to attend. These activities focused on the importance of interprofessional education and collaborative practice in different clinical settings. Students were asked to write a reflection essay after attending their activity to explain how their views about healthcare have changed as a result of the time that they spent in the Health Mentors Program. Students and Mentors alike completed the two-year program with a mutual appreciation and respect for the skills and insights that each individual contributes to the healthcare team.

We hope you have a wonderful, active, and healthy summer! We look forward to meeting with you again in the fall.

Best Wishes,

Chelsea Gorman, Nursing Student

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

The Importance of Health Literacy

by Kristina Toussaint

There's a saying: "A simple phrase is worth a thousand words." So what phrase is it? Health literacy, according to the National Institutes of Health, "incorporates a range of abilities: to read, comprehend, and analyze information; decode instructions, symbols, charts, and diagrams; weigh risks and benefits; and, ultimately, make decisions and take action" all regarding health decisions (2014).

Health literacy involves much more than the ability to read prescription labels and speak the same language as your therapist; it involves the ability to *comprehend* and *apply* this information in order to work towards healthier living. Limited health literacy has been linked to worse health outcomes, meaning it is critical that current and future health professionals be cognizant of this throughout their daily practice in order to provide the most appropriate and comprehensible care as possible.

In working with the Health Mentors, students strive to establish their mentors' health literacy right from the beginning in order to make all subsequent communications thereafter effective and meaningful. Additionally according to a 1992 study, the healthcare costs of patients identified with low health-literacy skills were more than four times as high as costs for patients with high literacy, roughly \$13,000 per year compared to \$3,000 per year! (NIH, 2014). This means that health professionals must cater their conversations and recommendations specifically to each of their patients not only to ensure their safety and well-being, but to also work towards cutting healthcare costs.

Through the Health Mentors program, students learn how to work together to meet the needs of their patients and to uphold the financial expectations our society places on healthcare. By you, our Health Mentors, helping us learn how to educate our future patients, we can become better doctors. Once this happens, we can help increase

health literacy, increasing our cities health and financial situation for everyone! So remember: Keep reading up on your healthcare! An informed patient is the best kind!

Upcoming Fall Modules

Year One Module 1:

Obtaining a Comprehensive Life & Health History

For this module, students will come prepared to ask you questions about your life and health history. This will include past medical, family and social history about your daily routine, hobbies and values. This meeting will take place on Jefferson's campus and will be scheduled for October by the Health Mentors Program staff.

Year Two Module 3:

Assessing Patient Safety

For this module, students will focus on safety in the home. Students will have a safety checklist and will ask you questions about general safety in your home, including your kitchen, bedrooms, stairways, etc. This meeting will ideally take place at your home, but if you are uncomfortable with that then it can take place in a community space or on Jefferson's campus. This meeting will be scheduled by your student team liaison in the month of October.

Health Mentors Program: Student Reflections

by Kathleen Tzan

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.

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.) or are a caretaker to someone who is living with chronic conditions or impairments.

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:
www.jefferson.edu/health-mentor

What Our Health Mentors Have to Say About the Program:

Compiled by David Halpern

"I really enjoyed the program and look forward to [participating in] it for years to come."

-Sharon Wolfe

"As a member (of the Health Mentors Program), I have seen such growth from the students, not only as individuals, but as a medical team as well."

-Ana Maria Iglesias

"I think it is a wonderful program. Being in a health field myself, I know that you new interns need to have experience caring for the sick one on one. Without this mentor program, you only have book knowledge and you need hands-on experience, and that is where the Health Mentors Program comes in."

-Rose Williams

"It was a very rewarding experience."

-Roberta Lucarelli



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

"I thought it was helpful for the students. The main emphasis was for the students to know that they should not come [in] with any preconceived notions about who a person is. They will now see people with mental health issues in a different light."

-Jeff Shair

"The students were very professional and nice, and I felt comfortable talking to them."

-Sharon Wolfe

"This was my first time in the program and I really appreciated that the students looked at us as a whole person and not just a diagnosis."

-Philip C. Moore Jr.

"For me it was about the relationship and the bond we get together. We loosen one another up and, once we meet, it lasts a lifetime for me. They will go on to experience things I have not and now I have the opportunity to have a new experience with them"

-Andrew Jackson

"This is my first time with the program and I had an awesome experience. My students were very attentive and listened to me throughout the program. I felt comfortable sharing with them the ups and downs of my life – things the doctors don't normally ask but should."

-Evelyn