Enhancing the Physician Workforce in Rural Areas

As the state’s leading educator of physicians practicing in Missouri, the MU School of Medicine is in a key position to improve the supply and distribution of physicians in rural Missouri. Although it can't single-handedly solve Missouri's rural health physician shortage, the school does have unique capabilities to enhance the physician workforce.

In response to the challenge, Dean Lester R. Bryant requested the creation of the MU Area Health Education Center (MU AHEC) program office in 1994 to address the shortage of physicians in rural areas of the state. The MU Rural Track Pipeline Program was designed to encompass four distinct but related curriculum and clinical components. The sequential programs provide students with ongoing exposure to rural medicine.

Program Components
- Bryant Scholars Pre-Admissions Program
- Summer Community Program
- Rural Track Clerkship Program
- Rural Track Elective Program

Outcomes
- Program participants are more likely to choose a primary care specialty and twice as likely to choose family medicine as their specialty when compared to non-participants
- 52% of participants practice in a rural location
- 77% of Bryant Scholars practice in Missouri

FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO APPLY OR FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT MEDICINE.MISSOURI.EDU/AHEC
Summer Community Program

The Summer Community Program is an exciting opportunity for MU School of Medicine’s rising second-year medical students to participate in a clinical program in a rural community setting for four to eight weeks after their first of medical school. Students work with one or more community-based physicians in a variety of specialties. Students experience the benefits and rewards of rural practice and perform appropriately focused medical histories and physical exams under the supervision of the physician. Students may perform other clinical tasks with supervision.

A participating hospital or clinic sponsors students by providing a stipend ($1,000 to $2,000 based on the length of the experience), as well as room and board.

Application and selection process
The application process is explained and information is distributed during the first year of medical school. The program is open to all rising second-year medical students in good academic standing. Selection for the Summer Community Program is based primarily on interest in rural practice.

MU Rural Track Clerkship Program

The MU Rural Track Clerkship Program offers third-year medical students clinical education in community-based training sites throughout the state. Students are given the unique opportunity to live and work in one of these communities to gain personal experience of the rewards of rural practice. Students may complete up to three core clerkships developed and approved by the MU School of Medicine’s clinical departments. Through this exposure, the program aims to increase the number of physicians who choose to practice in rural Missouri.

Community-based physicians serve as faculty and role models, guiding students through the program and serving as mentors for professional and personal development. In the busy rural settings, students care for a large number of patients and are able to experience continuity of care. Housing for students is provided by Area Health Education Centers, in cooperation with local hospitals.

Application and selection process
The application process is explained and information is distributed during the second year of medical school. The program is open to all third-year medical students in good academic standing. Selection for the Rural Track Clerkship Program is based primarily on interest in rural practice.

Rural Track Elective Program

Fourth-year medical students may choose to complete a variety of month-long primary care or specialty electives developed and approved by the school’s clinical departments in a rural, community-based setting. The Rural Track Elective Program provides students with an additional rural clinical experience during their final year of medical school, which helps the students explore and solidify their commitment to practicing rural medicine.

Application and selection process
The application process is explained and information is distributed during the third year of medical school. The program is open to all fourth-year medical students in good academic standing. Students wanting to take a rural track elective(s) must fill out a Rural Track Elective Program application to be considered for an elective placement. Elective placements will be approved or denied based on preceptor and/or housing availability. If available, housing for students is provided by Area Health Education Centers, in cooperation with local hospitals.

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