

Teaching and Learning from the Community: The Development of a Student-Run Outreach Program

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ABSTRACT

For a group of first-year students at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, the statistics and trends indicative of the widening gap between the medical establishment and the Baltimore city population propelled them to create an outreach program, Baltimore Community Medical Outreach (BCMO). The purpose of the program is to empower city residents with the knowledge and consciousness required to establish contact with a health care provider as an initial step in addressing their medical needs. In its first year of operation, the group delivered a series of workshops at a local village center on a range of topics including HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), hypertension, diabetes, and nutrition. The process of information dissemination, coupled with the audience's sharing of experiences, generated a collective knowledge that the audience could subsequently use to surmount the obstacles to patient-provider contact. The medical students learned many things in turn, including the transient holding power of medical advice, the need to tailor health guidelines to a specific population, and the many factors, such as family history of a disease, that drive a patient to action.
