Medical Students as Primary Care Providers
An integrated medical student clinic that offers a true longitudinal primary care experience
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Statement of Problem
Current Medical School Curriculum offers little exposure to long-term management of ambulatory patients. The Wednesday Evening Clinic (WEC) at the Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH) is an innovation that bridges this gap by teaching longitudinal care within an established Primary Care Center (PCC).

Program Objectives
1. Provide students with the opportunity to experience longitudinal clinical outpatient care.
2. Offer students the experience of managing their own patient cohort as primary care providers.
3. Provide outstanding medical care for an underserved patient population.

Program Description
The Wednesday Evening Clinic is student-staffed and fully integrated in the adult Primary Care Center of Yale-New Haven Hospital:

• Up to 15 students beyond clinical year
• Weekly attendance over one year to ensure longitudinal outpatient and experiential learning.

Student responsibilities & supervision:
• Supervision provided by faculty attending and volunteer attendings from the community.
• Student take ownership of patients’ care: general health maintenance, chronic disease management, age-appropriate screening, counseling and patient-care coordination. Follow-up beyond clinic hours is required.
• Patients may reach the clinic staff for appointments and refills even during non-clinic hours. The clinic also has full ancillary services from full-time employed staff.
• WEC fulfills primary care clerkship requirements. Built-in structure for regular feedback.

Sustainability: Supported by YNHH and Yale School of Medicine; billing from patient encounters contribute to covering costs.

Wednesday Evening Clinic is Unique Among Student Clinics
• WEC provides primary care, unlike many student clinics focusing on acute care, screening or bridging care.
• Instead of rotating students common to most student clinics, our students participate in nearly every clinic in the year. Patients recognize their providers week to week.
• Modeled after group practice, students are divided into patient care teams, each supervised by a designated faculty attending.
• Integrated with a larger hospital system, not a disconnected form of health care, a common criticism of student clinics.
• Phone call appointment reminders from undergraduate volunteers.
• Full ancillary services by professionals: lab, nursing, social work, scheduling, facilities.
• Residents participate in supervising patient care and teaching students.
• The same attending supervision and access to services is provided at WEC as the larger YNHH PCC, thus ensuring high quality of care.

Findings to Date

Student Perspective
We surveyed current and past student participants

“One of the biggest strengths of the clinic is the autonomy”
“WEC provides a great opportunity for me to keep up my clinical skills during my PhD years.”
“I got a lot of experience dealing with other aspects of patient care: referrals navigation, Project Access, charity care, and social services…definitely prepared me well for my residency in family medicine.”
At the clinic, I regularly see how poverty breaks down, isolates, and sickens individuals…and that perspective has permeated my ideas and plans.

Patient Perspectives
We surveyed patients on why they chose WEC and recommendations for improvement:

• Student providers are friendly and show concerns for patients’ needs
• Evening clinic is convenient for those who work during the day
• Areas for improvement include flow and waiting times

Lessons Learned
• Longitudinal care experience is possible in medical school.
• Integration into large teaching hospitals allows student-staffed clinic to be sustainable and provide better care.
• Students show improved comfort with providing outpatient primary care.
• Students’ choices of career specialties are largely unchanged after WEC participation.
• Participation in WEC allows students to effectively improve their clinical skills even during research year(s).

Figure 1. Comfort level in providing outpatient patient care before and after participation in WEC

Chart 1. Percent of WEC and non-WEC Yale students entering primary care specialties (Internal Medicine, Primary Care, Family Medicine or Pediatrics) from 2009-2013.

References

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