

# Community-based HPV vaccination for rural Wisconsin

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The mission of my Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation (Foundation) Summer Fellowship in Government and Community Service was to disseminate information about human papillomavirus (HPV), cervical cancer, and the HPV vaccine so that female adolescents, together with their parents, could make informed decisions about whether or not to receive the HPV vaccine series.

The project was developed as a result of concerns raised by Michael Mahan, MD, of Black River Falls, Wis, that a low proportion of his adolescent patients were opting to receive the vaccine. Because the vaccination series should be completed before any sexual activity occurs, our goal was to speak with our target population (ie, female adolescents and their parents or guardians) during pre-teen checkups and/or visits to the clinic for acute illnesses, as well as reaching them through community health education efforts and print materials.

Throughout the summer, I spent a full week with at least 5 different family physicians and nearly 3 weeks working with my mentor, Dr Mahan, at the Krohn Clinic in

Black River Falls. Each time we saw a patient who was eligible for the vaccine (ie, female aged 9 to 26), we discussed HPV, cervical cancer, and the HPV vaccine. To prepare, I studied the HPV vaccine prescribing information and completed an extensive literature review, not only so that I could provide the most up-to-date information to patients, but also to develop a survey regarding HPV, cervical cancer, and the HPV vaccine for distribution to parents of vaccine-eligible adolescents.

In addition to work in the clinic, I was able to participate in some community health education activities. I served on the planning committee for an event titled "Women's Wellness: A Free Community Event," which drew nearly 150 attendees. Another event, a women's health fair held at the Black River Memorial Hospital featured displays, information, and screening services from multiple departments of the Black River Memorial Hospital, Krohn Clinic, and Jackson County Public Health Department as well as Western Dairyland Women's Health Center and the Ho-Chunk Health Department. The health fair included a panel of health care professionals from

Krohn Clinic who addressed many women's health topics ranging from adolescence through post-menopause. I participated in the panel focusing on adolescence, with an emphasis on educating the audience about HPV, cervical cancer, and the HPV vaccine. I also prepared a table-top display used at the health fair and later displayed at Krohn Clinic.

Through my Foundation fellowship, I gained practical clinical experience and learned a great deal about health care in a rural community. As a student in the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, I have a strong desire to eventually return to my hometown area of Black River Falls and practice family medicine. This fellowship has strengthened that desire. By serving on the planning committee for the women's health fair and working with the variety of organizations that affect health care, I gained invaluable networking experience and intervention planning skills that will help me in the future. I am grateful for the insight I gained into the many different factors that can affect a community's health through this fellowship opportunity.

The goal of the Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation's Summer Fellowship in Government and Community Service Program is to provide medical students a public health research opportunity within a Wisconsin community. The experience exists to educate students about ways in which the medical profession can work to improve health through connections to both community organizations and government. Each student receives a \$3500 stipend. The fellowships require the support of donors to make the experi-

ence possible and physician mentors who help guide and foster students' projects.

In 2009, the Foundation provided 6 fellowships, which will be highlighted in the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* throughout the year. For more program information and sponsorship opportunities, please contact Foundation Executive Director, Rebecca Thompson, CPA, at [rebecca.thompson@wismed.org](mailto:rebecca.thompson@wismed.org).

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