



Robert N.  
Golden, MD

## A strategic approach to addressing physician workforce needs

Robert N. Golden, MD

There are many complexities related to our national dialog on health care reform, but clearly an important aspect of any successful effort to improve access to health care must take into account the growing scarcity of physicians working with underserved populations. The UW School of Medicine and Public Health has been strategically addressing this issue in several ways.

In an earlier issue of this *Journal*, we highlighted one of our school's pioneering efforts: the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM). This program is a major component of our strategic response to the national cry for increasing the physician workforce. We are now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 5 years of ramping up WARM. In the end, we will have increased each class by 25 students, with the new WARM cohort selected based on their backgrounds, aptitude for and commitment to careers that focus on serving Wisconsin's underserved rural populations.

By all measures, this program—directed Byron Crouse, MD, our Associate Dean for rural and Community Health—has gotten off to a remarkably strong start.

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Doctor Golden is the Robert Turell Professor in Medical Leadership, Dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health, and Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Our first group of WARM students is currently engaged in their third year of clinical training at Rice Lake, a vital training site of our Marshfield Academic Campus. We are looking forward soon to expanding the clinical training to include sites in Prairie du Chien, Whitehall, Tomah, and Decorah, all of which are affiliated with our Western Academic Campus in the Gunderson Lutheran Health System.

An equally pressing need is to increase the pipeline of physicians who will focus their professional work on underserved populations in our urban centers. Wisconsin urgently needs more clinicians in Milwaukee, the area of greatest disparity in our state. We are extremely excited about the successful launch this year of the Training in Urban Medicine and Public Health program, or TRIUMPH, under the leadership of Cynthia Haq, MD. Marge Stearns, MPH, has been our invaluable liaison in Milwaukee.

Following a successful pilot in 2009, this year we selected an impressive group of 8 medical students who will spend 5 months of their 3<sup>rd</sup> year and at least 5 months of their 4<sup>th</sup> year in Milwaukee. They will complete obstetrics/gynecology, primary care, and internal medicine clerkships, as well as many senior-year electives. These will take place in the Aurora Sinai Medical Center; in several

federally qualified community health centers, such as 16th Street Community Health Center and Milwaukee Health Services; and in free clinics, neighborhood centers, and other community-based organizations such as the Bread of Healing Clinic, Walnut Way, the Milwaukee Health Department, Milwaukee Public Schools, and United Community Center. All of these partners are committed to serving Milwaukee's most disadvantaged residents.

What is especially exciting about TRIUMPH is the partnership each medical student forms with a community group and community mentor. During the pilot phase last year, our students worked with many of the organizations listed above to create innovative projects dealing with topics such as tobacco cessation, reduction in infant mortality, reduction in childhood obesity rates, sex education, substance abuse, nutrition, and prevention/control of hypertension and diabetes.

We believe that TRIUMPH is a great example of the Wisconsin Idea being channeled into a thoughtful strategic plan for tackling one of the most critical issues in our state: the limited supply of physicians who work primarily with disadvantaged and underserved urban populations.

We are amazed at how excited students have been about this program.

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developed for that purpose.

- *Webinars*—MetaStar sponsored a series of webinars dealing with different areas of pressure ulcer prevention. These, like the learning sessions, carry continuing education credit.
- *Data*—Facilities collected data; MetaStar put the data into monthly reports and ran charts.
- *E-newsletter*—A regular newsletter provided additional information to participants.

WPUC is continuing with similar activities in its second year. Given the stakes, it behooves facilities to consider joining the coalition. If a facility you work with is interested in exploring the possibility of membership, they should contact Jody Rothe at 608.274.1940 or jrothe@metastar.com.

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## Dean's Corner

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We are equally in awe of—and so very grateful to—the community-based mentors and preceptors who have enthusiastically embraced additional teaching responsibilities, on top of their already filled plates of responsibilities.

With the creation of WARM and TRIUMPH, we have made important strides in recruiting more medical students into community service where they are needed the most. At the same time, it has focused our attention on the earlier components of the clinician workforce pipeline. Ideally, we would like to attract young people into medical careers that focus on underserved populations in rural and central city Wisconsin, especially those who are from disadvantaged underserved populations themselves.

Thus, we created a college pipeline program, Rural and Urban Scholars in Community Health (RUSCH). This past summer we began RUSCH in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and quickly expanded the program to include Spelman College in Atlanta. We hope that over time, we will be able to expand this program to include other colleges in Wisconsin.

Many steps remain in the long journey to achieving the important goals of health care reform in our country. We believe that WARM, TRIUMPH, and RUSCH represent giant leaps forward in our trek toward full access to safe, high-quality health care for all.

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