

## Expanding the Pipeline of Rural Students Interested in Medicine

Dear Editor:

I remember sitting in class my sophomore year of high school wondering what my future would hold. The thought of becoming a physician had just begun to smolder in the back of my mind, but whether a career in medicine or even going to college was possible made me doubt myself. As an aspiring first generation college student from a rural community, the odds seemed stacked against me. What I needed was a source of inspiration that becoming a physician was possible.

During my undergraduate studies, I found a spark of inspiration: the Advocates in Medicine Pathway (AMP) through the Medical College of Wisconsin-Central Wisconsin and North Central Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC). As part of the program, I was connected to men-

tors and provided with tools to help make me a more competitive medical school applicant. Surrounded by a group of diverse premedical students like myself in AMP, I felt empowered and galvanized to pursue a career in rural medicine.

There are other programs in Wisconsin focused on creating a pipeline of rural and underrepresented students into medical school. However, these programs target individuals who have already demonstrated an interest in medicine by having students apply or register. But what about the students who don't know they have an interest in medicine or are lacking a source of inspiration?

To help expand the pipeline of rural students matriculating into medical school and ultimately increase the number of physicians practicing in rural Wisconsin, programs should be developed to inspire rural high school students that becoming a physician is possible. One potential way to achieve this is by presenting workshops during class periods so that all students are targeted—not just those with a demonstrated interest in medicine. From there, programs like AMP can

assist scholars in crafting competitive medical school applications. A similar model in New Hampshire was developed where a medical student went to a high school and presented on rural medicine, possible careers, and personal stories. An initial trial of this program showed promising results in inspiring high school students.<sup>1</sup>

As the shortage of rural physicians continues to impact our communities, new initiatives are needed to increase the number of physicians in rural Wisconsin. It is my hope that programs like the New Hampshire model can be implemented in Wisconsin to help inspire more students to enter the pipeline to medical school.

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### REFERENCE

1. Dunn MC, Saks NS. Inspiring rural high school students to consider careers in medicine and the Health Professions. *Rural Educ.* 2020;41(2):64-69. doi:10.35608/ruraled.v41i2.867



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